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ABSTRACT

This second interim report presents evaluation results from Project Youth Experiencing Success (YES) and documents a decrease in the Virginia statewide event-dropout rate in grades 7 through 12 from 4.8 percent during the 1988-89 school year to 3.3 percent during the 1991-92 year. Event-dropout rates measure the proportion of students who drop out in a single year without completing high school. The project supports school divisions in their efforts to provide services for at-risk youth. A statewide survey of Project YES coordinators and an in-depth case study of seven schools found that there is some active attempt to foster parent involvement by Project YES staff. The major focus is on helping the parent help the child with schoolwork and in involving parents as volunteers in school. Project YES shows community involvement primarily by using service agencies for referrals and for information. Data on parent and community approaches show room for improvement and innovation. The project evaluation team suggests that YES programs might be more effective if school divisions were to devote more time to inservice training and cooperation with local colleges and universities. Ten appendixes present numerical data on dropouts and supporting materials, including the statewide survey instrument and the principal and teacher interview guides. (Contains 63 references.) (SLD)

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HYPOTHESES FOR EFFECTIVE DROPOUT PREVENTION: LESSONS FROM PROJECT "YES"

Virginia Department of Education
Richmond, Virginia
1993

VIRGINIA DROPOUTS FACT SHEET

During the 1988-89 school year, Virginia adopted a definition of dropout that has been used for four years. Dropouts are students in grades 7-12 and ungraded pupils ages 12 and older who have withdrawn from school for reasons other than promotion, transfer, death, or graduation and do not enter another school during the same year. Analyses of Virginia's 1991-92 dropout data show the following:

1. From 1988-89 through 1991-92, there has been a 31 percent decline in the number of Virginia students dropping out of school. During the 1988-89 school year, 20,772 students in grades 7-12 dropped out of school as compared to 14,236 during the 1991-92 school year.

2. Of the total number of students dropping out of school in grades 7-12, 58 percent are white, 35 percent are black, 4 percent are Hispanic, 2 percent are Asian, and less than 1 percent are American Indian.

3. Although the majority of dropouts are white, a higher proportion of minority students drop out than do white students. For example, while 24 percent of the total end of year membership is black, 35 percent of dropouts in grades 7-12 are black.

4. Virginia differs from national data in that 59 percent of dropouts are male in Virginia as compared to 49 percent nationally.

5. The largest percentage of total dropouts is at the ninth grade (28%) followed by the tenth grade (24%).

6. Event dropout rate measures the proportion of students who drop out in a single year without completing high school. During the 1991-92 school year, the statewide event dropout rate for students in grades 7-12 was 3.3 percent.

7. A statistically reliable estimate of the total percentage of Virginia students who will drop out while in grades 7-12 shows that approximately 18 percent of Virginia students drop out of school before graduating.

8. For 1990-91, school divisions with event dropout rates above 5 percent are scattered throughout the state, rather than being concentrated in one or more areas. Additionally, these school divisions include some urban and some rural areas.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE BENEFITS OF PROJECT "YES"
Quotes From Student Produced Videos

Nelson County Alpha Program (School-Within-a-School)

This program teaches you a lot about yourself. You learn things you are capable of doing, how to accept responsibility, increase self-confidence and self-esteem. You learn things that help you later in life as well as now.

We all work together here - that's the theme of this school. Everyone working together - students and faculty. We learn that we are responsible for our education.

The teachers here are your friends and your teachers. You get to know each other better. It's more of a family-like atmosphere.

Alexandria STEP Program (Alternative School)

This program has helped me by making me come to school every day. The teachers pay more attention to you. They call my house and make sure I am coming to school.

If you need help, they'll help you. The schools in the city are crowded - I came here because if you need extra help you get it - in my home school the teachers don't have the time to help me.

Montgomery County Independence Secondary School (Alternative School)

The teachers here will take the time out any time and give you an extra hand. They're not just teachers - they're friends. If you have problems you can just go to a teacher. They're easy to talk to. It's not like my home school. The staff here are available to us and they listen to us.

Before coming to the alternative school, I was ready to give up. But when I came here I was made to realize that no matter what you do, you just can't give up. That's why the alternative school has made so much difference in so many peoples' lives. They help you no matter what.

Virginia Beach Center for Effective Learning (Alternative School)

They teach you here that you have to do it yourself - no one is going to do it for you. They're not going to put up with you if you mess up. This is the last resort. I've learned you have to have respect for everyone if you want respect.

It's not boring here like it was in my regular school. I'm not sitting in one place for a long period getting lectured to. When the teacher talks to you it's one on one. You're a real person with them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I. POLICIES

Policy recommendations, based on the second year of the evaluation, include the following:

1. Every Project Youth Experiencing Success (YES) program should fully and periodically inform the community, through the superintendent, the local school board, and other means, about its goals, expectations, and methods.

2. Every Project YES program should develop and use a signed contract between the school and the parent, defining the rights, expectations, and responsibilities for the education and development of the child.

3. Every Project YES program should include a plan for disseminating information to other Project YES programs about the program's effective practices for serving high-risk students.

4. One of the obstacles to improved collaborative efforts among Project YES programs, human service agencies, non-formal youth agencies, and local youth programs is the lack of school insurance for youth participating in programs and activities after regular school hours. Consideration should be given to the design and implementation of a statewide insurance pool to facilitate school use by community human service agencies and programs.

II. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

1. Project YES programs should consider the appropriateness of hiring community residents as liaisons to neighborhoods and communities served by the program.

2. Inservice education for Project YES counselors, social workers, teachers, and program coordinators should include learning about the host community of the school, local cultures and subcultures, and local human service agencies and groups.

3. Faculty and staff inservice education for all school staff members should include current knowledge about at-risk students and community and school responses to them.

4. School divisions should review and report regularly on their programmatic efforts to meet the learning needs of at-risk students with whom they have been <u>least</u> effective.

5. Project YES programs should increase communication with parents on a regular basis. Monthly newsletters, frequent "notes to parents," and telephone message systems are methods of communication used effectively by some school divisions.

6. Efforts should be made to facilitate the involvement in Project YES programs of registered students at accredited colleges, universities, and other postsecondary institutions. Students can serve as tutors, counselors, and as assistants to teachers in the classroom.

7. Particular attention should be given to youth who are or are thought to be homeless, including an exploration of specific services to address their unique needs.

8. Particular attention should be given to the revitalization and utilization of community education to meet the learning needs of at-risk students not helped by current efforts, by extending the continuum of education deeper into the community. This would include efforts to bring together collaborative comprehensive services for students and their families.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This second interim report was prepared by the Virginia Department of Education's Project YES evaluation team to provide findings and recommendations about the implementation of Project YES in Virginia.

The Virginia Department of Education appreciates the efforts of many local school division staff personnel and students who participated in the data collection and the preparation of this report.

We especially appreciate the efforts of Dr. Michael Baizerman, of the University of Minnesota, who provided substantial assistance in the development and implementation of this study and report.

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This study was conducted with support from Dr. Doris Redfield, Deputy Superintendent for Policy, Assessment, Research, and Information Systems, and Dr. Gerald Eads II, Education Lead Specialist, Division of Research and Evaluation.

The evaluation team would also like to thank the following Department of Education staff members for their assistance in the preparation of this report: Mr. Peter Beck, Ms. Evelyn Donigan, Ms. Virginia Hettinger, Ms. Sandra Jackson, Mr. Dan Keeling, and Mr. Harry Smith.

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GLOSSARY

Students At-Risk to School Failure - At-risk students are those who are less willing or less able to perform the normative student role in their community schools. Failure to "function as a student" may be attributed to personal or family problems, incapacity, or to the inability of the school to meet the unique needs of individuals or small groups of students. Students at-risk to school failure may be those who have fallen behind in skills and studies, have a high probability of not successfully completing formal education, or have dropped out of school. Risk to school failure is relative. For example, a student may be considered at low risk if he or she is absent for a week due to illness and might require a tutor; a high school student who is truant for an extended period may be considered at high risk and require considerably greater attention. Also, risk is relative in terms of time; students may be educationally at-risk briefly or for a prolonged period, depending on the nature and source of the conditions causing their poor school performance.

Risk is also a basic concept in child welfare and juvenile justice where it is used in different contexts. When schools identify and address the needs of at-risk students, it should be kept in mind that risk is not a blanket term, but rather an interactive and malleable one that may vary depending upon the context it is being applied.

Dropout - Dropouts are students in grades 7-12 and ungraded pupils ages 12 and older who have withdrawn from school for reasons other than promotion, transfer, death, or graduation and do not enter another school during the same year.

Event Dropout Rate - Event dropout rate measures the proportion of students who drop out in a single year without completing high school.

Synthetic Cohort Dropout Rate - Synthetic cohort dropout rate provides a statistically reliable estimate of the total percentage of students in a grade cohort who will drop out while in grades 7-12.

Ungraded Students - Ungraded students are those ages 5 through 21 who are in self-contained special education classes or alternative education program classes "for which separate attendance accounting is kept." Also included are those pupils who did not successfully complete all three components of the Literacy Testing Program (LTP) by the close of grade 8.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HYPOTHESES FOR EFFECTIVE DROPOUT PREVENTION: LESSONS FROM PROJECT "YES"

This second interim report presents data documenting a decrease in the statewide event dropout rate in grades 7 through 12 from 4.8 percent during the 1988-89 to 3.3 percent during the 1991-92 school year. Event dropout rates measure the proportion of students who drop out in a single year without completing high school. Based upon the 1991-92 statewide dropout data, an estimated 18 percent of all Virginia students leave school before graduating from high school.

It is shown that a higher percentage of males drop out in Virginia than do nationally (59% vs. 49%), and the largest percentage of dropouts is at the ninth grade (28%), followed by the tenth grade (24%). Of all dropouts, whites had the highest percentage (58%), followed by blacks (35%). During the 1990-91 school year, school divisions with event dropout rates above 5 percent were scattered throughout the state, rather than being concentrated in one or more areas. Additionally, these school divisions included some urban and some rural areas.

A statewide survey of Project YES coordinators and an in-depth case study of seven schools found that there is some active attempt at parent involvement by Project YES staff members. The major focus is on helping the parent help the child at home with schoolwork and involving parents somewhat in volunteering their time to help the school.

Project YES shows involvement in the community primarily by using community agencies for referrals and for information. Data show relatively little use by Project YES programs of community programs or business partnerships.

Data on Project YES parent and community involvement efforts suggest that there is much room for improvement and innovation, and argues for a broader conceptualization by Project YES and the schools of their roles outside the school building and towards prevention, including the continuum of learning offered by community education.

Also, it is clear that there are many different kinds of factors which contribute to the several types of at-risk students. It is clear that no one school practice will be effective for all at-risk students. Data suggest that one type of at-risk student is helped by individualized attention and extra teacher time. For this student, these alone may constitute effective practice. For other at-risk children and youth, there is evidence to support the use of personal counseling, often in conjunction with extra attention and time. Consequently, it is increasingly clear that effective

practice should be thought of as a combination of practices rather than as a single technique or a single practice.

An assessment of program evaluation at the local level found that Project YES staff members are evaluating their programs primarily in five domains: Increasing attendance (39%), reducing discipline referrals and suspensions (37%), reducing the dropout rate (29%), increasing achievement test scores (25%), and improving grades (24%).

The Project YES evaluation team believes that funds for YES keep attention on the at-risk student in a school environment of multiple constituencies, multiple problems, multiple needs, and decreasing budgets. Without Project YES funds, this attentiveness could disappear, along with the means of responding to these youth.

The Project YES evaluation team suggests that YES programs might be more effective if school divisions were more attentive to in-service education on at-risk students; if they joined with local colleges and universities to involve those students in Project YES in a variety of ways; if they adopted a developmental perspective in their work; and, if they were more aware of the process by which a youth leaves school.

The responsibilities of school counselors, visiting teachers, and social workers in relation to at-risk students are areas worthy of study to increase understanding of Project YES. Also worthy of investigation is the need for services for homeless youth in the schools.

Appendices present numerical data on dropout and other supporting material, including the data collection instruments.

CHAPTER I
THE STATISTICAL DATA

INTRODUCTION

Project "Youth Experiencing Success" (YES) began during the 1989-90 school year in response to Virginia's unacceptably high dropout rate. The project, which resulted from action by the General Assembly, is now in its fourth year. During the 1992-93 school year, 103 school divisions (77%) received funding to enhance their efforts in dropout prevention. The remaining 30 school divisions did not receive funding because the appropriation was insufficient to fund every school division statewide. (Appendix A provides a list of school divisions receiving Project YES funds 1989-90 through 1992-93, the statutory sources of Project YES, and the formula used for disbursing funds.) During the 1992-93 school year, $10,470,997 was allocated statewide for Project YES.

Project YES is designed to support school divisions in their efforts to provide services for "at-risk" youth, i.e., learners who are less able or less willing to take on and perform the normative student role in their community schools. Failure to "function as a student" may be attributed to personal or family problems, incapacity, or to the inability of the school to meet the unique needs of individuals or small groups of students.

The Department of Education (DOE) began a statewide evaluation of Project YES in July 1991. This is the second interim report of the three-year study. Preliminary findings and recommendations from the first year of the study were provided in Project YES: Does It Work? (Virginia Department of Education, 1992), and were presented to the Joint Subcommittee Studying School Dropout and Ways to Promote the Development of Self-Esteem Among Youth and Adults in December 1991. A brief summary of the first interim report is provided in Appendix B.

PURPOSES OF THE EVALUATION

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to illuminate Project YES and in this way make it available to policymakers and others. Illumination discloses and facilitates, but does not decide or defend. Instead, the evaluation can make policy and programmatic decisions more focused and valid as it fosters reflection, opinion, and choice. The illumination of Project YES was accomplished in part in the first interim report by focusing attention on ways in which policies could be modified to likely lead to a reduction of student risk to early school leaving. Thus, the evaluation was oriented to Project YES program enhancement more than to program assessment.

This report is designed to convey information that may enhance program improvement and to draw attention to select issues in the prevention and control of students leaving school before graduation. The report is also intended to serve as a resource

guide for decision makers and program staff by providing 1) an overview of Virginia school dropout data, 2) a model for parent and community involvement, and 3) proposed criteria for the identification of at-risk students. These and similar data allow for inter-program comparisons to be made by the DOE and local school divisions.

The final report in December 1993 will be designed to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about policies and programs to reduce the risk of students dropping out of school. This report will contribute to DOE discussions of the best ways to provide technical assistance to school division personnel on strategies for program improvement and on how long-term program evaluation could be done. Appendix C provides an overview of what is likely to be in the final report.

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND DROPOUT PREVENTION

The evaluation of Project YES is one of a number of DOE projects designed to reduce student risk to early school leaving and to increase student academic performance. Among these DOE efforts are the Project YES administration team; the Youth Risk Prevention Project; the Alternative Education Project, and the Comprehensive Program for Persons At-Risk.

Appendix D provides a diagram of the relationship among these programs and a brief description of the purpose of each. Appendix E provides a DOE draft of Criteria for the Identification of Educationally At-Risk Children and Youth.

These and other state-level efforts are supplemented at the local level by a wide range of school and community-based programs and activities that emphasize prevention, intervention, dropout retrieval, and parent and community involvement. Together, these constitute Virginia's efforts to prevent early school leaving. Hence, any positive change in the dropout rate may be due to the cumulative effect of all of these projects.

Evidence from a statewide survey of Project YES coordinators and a case study of seven schools indicate that Project YES is an integral part of school divisions' efforts to address the needs of students at-risk to early school leaving and in this way to reduce the dropout rate. However, it is not possible to isolate the programmatic effects of Project YES from other state and local efforts because of the way the funds are merged at the local level, and as noted, because Project YES is not the only effort being made by the DOE and other state and local agencies to reduce the number of dropouts. Evidence of success in reducing the number of students leaving school early is found in the comparison of statewide dropout rates from 1988-89 through 1991-92.

HOW MANY STUDENTS DROP OUT OF SCHOOL?

Introduction

The 1991-92 school year was the fourth consecutive school year that Virginia has collected dropout data statewide using a consistent definition. This section presents a brief overview of national dropout data followed by a detailed presentation of Virginia dropout rates by gender, grade level, and race/ethnicity. These data show a decrease in the number of students leaving school early and provide a basis for targeting specific populations of students for dropout prevention efforts at both the state and local levels.

National Reports

When viewed in a historical perspective, the current national dropout rate is relatively low. In 1900, only about 10 percent of all males received a high school diploma. In 1920, the completion rate was about 20 percent. It was not until the 1950s that the completion rate exceeded 50 percent. The graduation rate nationally reached its peak of 75 percent in the mid-1960s, and it has remained fairly stable since that year. However, the changing structure of our economic system and the significant demographic changes that have occurred nationally have resulted in increased attention to the number of students dropping out of school (Wehlage, 1989:30).

Current national data on dropouts is produced by the National Center for Educational Statistics (1992). The NCES report presents detailed data on dropouts, using three types of dropout rates and several types of high school completion and graduation rates. At this time, none of these data provides a basis for making accurate comparisons of Virginia dropout rates with national dropout rates or with other states. However, it is anticipated by staff at NCES that these comparisons will be available in the late fall of 1993.

National dropout rates have declined over the last decade. The event dropout rate for persons ages 15 through 24 in grades 10-12 was 6.1 percent in 1980 and 4.0 percent in 1991. The decline in the event rate occurred at each grade and at each age level. Event dropout rates measure the proportion of students who drop out in a single year without completing high school (NCES, 1992:v). Event dropout rates are important because they reveal how many students are leaving school each year and how each year's rate compares with previous ones. The event dropout rate represents approximately 348,000 students nationally dropping out of school in 1991 (NCES: 1992:vi).

These national figures mask both the fact that as many as 50 percent of inner-city youth never graduate from high school (Natriello, 1986:103) as well as ethnic and gender differences in

dropout rates. Nationally, Hispanics have much higher and blacks somewhat higher dropout rates than whites.

Virginia Dropout Rates[1]

Beginning in the 1988-89 school year, dropouts were defined as "Pupils in grades 7-12 and ungraded pupils ages 12 and older who withdrew from school for reasons other than promotion, transfer, death, or graduation and do not enter another school during the same year" (Virginia Department of Education, 1992: 25). In Virginia, during 1991-92, 14,236 students in grades 7-12 were reported to have dropped out of school, resulting in an event dropout rate of 3.3 percent. This represents a 31 percent decline in the number of dropouts statewide between 1988-89 and 1991-92. (See Table 1).

Over the four-year period, 1988-89 through 1991-92, the percentage of males and females who dropped out of school remained stable with 59 percent male and 41 percent female. This is of particular interest because national dropout data for 1991 indicate virtually no difference between the percentage of dropouts who were male (49.4%) and female (50.6%) (NCES, 1992:16). (See Table 2) Figure 1 provides the geographic distribution of dropout rates for male students and Figure 2 shows the geographic distribution of dropout rates for female students. These figures show that some counties have considerable variation in dropout rates for males as compared to females.

The largest percentage of dropouts is at the ninth grade (28.2%), followed by the tenth grade (24.0%). Over the four-year period, these percentages have remained essentially the same (See Table 3). It should be noted that grade level does not necessarily correspond

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[1] Virginia adopted a standard definition of dropout beginning during the 1988-89 school year. Appendix F includes detailed dropout data from 1988-89 through 1991-92. Included are statewide dropout rates, the percent of dropouts by gender, the percent of dropouts by grade level, the percent of total dropouts by race/ethnic category, event dropout rates by grade and race/ethnicity and event dropout rates by grade, race/ethnicity and gender. Also, Figure 1 provides the geographic distribution of dropout rates for male students and Figure 2 shows the geographic distribution of dropout rates for female students (1990-91). Figure 3 provides the geographic distribution of dropout rates for all students (1990-91). Dropout rates 1988-89 through 1991-92 by school division and participation in Project YES in 1991-92 are included and discussed later in this report. Synthetic cohort dropout rates by school division are also included. Both Figure 3 and synthetic cohort dropout rates are discussed later in this section. Finally, technical notes are provided that show how the dropout rates discussed in this section were calculated.

to chronological age. Data are collected by the DOE from school divisions by grade level and do not reflect the number of dropouts who are overage for grade.

Table 4 shows the percentage of total dropouts by race/ethnicity. Of all dropouts in 1991-92, whites had the highest percentage (58.0%), followed by blacks (35.0%), Hispanics (4.4%), Asians (2.2%) and American Indians (0.4%). From 1988-89 through 1991-92, there were modest shifts in the statistics. The percentage of white youth dropouts declined 6.8 percent, the percent of black youth dropouts increased 3.9 percent, and the percent of Hispanic youth dropouts increased 2.2 percent. In relation to the percentage of students enrolled by ethnic group, black, Hispanic and American Indian students have a disproportionately high number of dropouts. For example, while the total membership in 1991-92 was 23.5 percent black, 35 percent of dropouts were black.

Table 5 presents event dropout rates by grade and race/ethnicity for the 1991-92 school year. (Data for the 1988-89 and 1989-90 school years are not included because similar data were not collected prior to the 1990-91 school year.) These data show that grade-specific event dropout rates for grades 7-12 varied from a low of .5 percent in the seventh grade to a high of 4.9 percent in the ninth and tenth grades.

While Table 4 shows that most dropouts were white, Table 5 shows that the dropout rate for white students was among the lowest of any racial/ethnic group (2.7%). American Indian students had the highest dropout rate, (7.1%), followed by Hispanics, (5.9%), and blacks, (4.8%). Asian students had the lowest dropout rate, 2.0 percent.

Table 6 shows event dropout rates by grade, race/ethnicity and gender for the 1991-92 school year. Overall, the event dropout rate for males was 3.8 percent and for females 2.7 percent. This table shows that the highest dropout rate in grades 7-12 was among ninth-grade males (5.8%) and tenth-grade males (5.6%). For females, the highest rate was found at the tenth-grade level (4.1%) and ninth-grade level (4.0%).

For grades 7 through 12, American Indians had the highest dropout rate of all ethnic groups. However, this rate may not be accurate since it is based on a total enrollment of only 111 students, too few to be considered stable for statistical purposes. For black students, the rate was highest among ninth- (9%) and tenth-grade males (9.1%) and for white students the highest dropout rate was among ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-grade males (5.1-5.8%).

Also of interest is the geographic representation of school divisions by the size of their event dropout rate in 1990-91. Figure 3 shows this distribution for all students. School divisions with dropout rates above 5 percent were scattered

throughout the state, rather than being concentrated in one or more areas. Additionally, these divisions included some urban and some rural areas, large divisions such as Norfolk City, and small divisions such as Orange County.

While event dropout rates are important because they reveal how many students are leaving school each year and how each year's rates compare to previous years, they do not provide a measure of how many students in a single age group drop out over time, as do cohort rates. To calculate cohort rates, it is necessary to follow over time a specific group of students, e.g., all those students entering the seventh grade in 1991-92. This is not possible in Virginia because there is no student-level tracking system in place. Texas and possibly other states have implemented systems for tracking dropouts and for other purposes. However, such a system is costly to develop and implement and could require the addition of staff at the state and local levels.

However, it is possible to project, i.e., estimate, the probability of groups of students graduating by using a "synthetic cohort dropout rate."[2] This rate can be calculated using the 1991-92 event dropout for each grade level (Table 5). This approach assumes the event dropout rate remains the same over time. It provides a slightly inflated rate because it includes students who will drop out more than once between grades 7 and 12. The advantage of this approach is that it provides a statistically reliable estimate of the total percentage of students in a grade cohort who will drop out while in grades 7-12. Using this approach, it can be projected that approximately 18 percent of Virginia students in grades 7-12 drop out of school.

Synthetic cohort dropout rates by school division were also calculated and are included in Appendix F. These data show wide variation in the estimated percentage of students in a grade cohort who will drop out while in grades 7-12. For example, five school divisions calculated the synthetic dropout rate as 4.2 percent or less, seventeen, 5.4-9.9%; twenty-six, 10-14.4%; thirty-two, 15.2-19.6%; twenty, 20.0-23.9%; 23, 24.0-29.8%; and eight, 30.3-40.8%. It must be kept in mind that the effect of excluding ungraded

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[2]The synthetic cohort dropout rate was chosen as the most appropriate statistic for projecting the probability of groups of Virginia students dropping out over time based upon telephone conversations with a staff member at the National Center for Educational Statistics.

It should be noted that ungraded students are not included in the calculation of the synthetic cohort dropout rate because of the formula used for its calculation. Depending upon how ungraded students are classified, i.e., the grade level, the statewide synthetic cohort dropout rate could increase from 18.1 to 18.5 percent.

students when calculating the synthetic cohort dropout rate by school division is more pronounced than at the statewide level due to the variation in the number of ungraded students reported by each school division. For example, using graded only students in the calculation, Caroline County shows a synthetic cohort dropout rate of 12.3 percent. If ungraded students are included and distributed evenly across grade levels, the synthetic cohort dropout rate increases to 20.5%. Similarly, Henrico County would show an increase from 10.2% to 13.9% and Lunenburg County would show an increase from 8.9% to 12.0%. No other school division would show an increase of more than 2.6% if ungraded students were included in the calculation.

In considering these data, it is important to be mindful that students' schooling is no longer a continuous and highly predictable career (Buchmann, 1989). It is now common for students to take multiple routes to completing high school or to receiving an equivalent degree. Students may drop out and reenter school several times before completing their high school or equivalent degree. The United States Department of Education estimates that in 1991, 87 percent of students nationwide completed high school or its equivalent by age 24 (NCES, 1992: viii).

Discussion

The findings linking age/grade, gender and ethnicity are very important in considering Project YES program implementation. Putting these factors together, gender is the most powerful, then age/grade, and then ethnicity. The examination of these data allow Project YES to target populations of high-risk youth with programs to meet their unique individual and group needs. Since schools seem to be more responsive to the individual, not the population group, these data can be used to encourage schools to think about developmental age/stage, school level, gender and ethnicity, and to devise programs in this way.

School divisions should use local data to reflect again on their students, to develop programs to meet their needs, and to compare their programs with those in divisions similar to their own.

SUMMARY

Virginia's dropout statistics are presented in this section for use as an outcome criterion of program effectiveness and as a planning tool for both local school divisions and the DOE.

The report shows very clearly that there are group patterns for dropouts at the state level which, when taken together with other data, indicate both why and how students leave school early and encourage consideration of prevention and intervention strategies to deal with the problem.

Crucial is the point that nationwide rates show that 87 percent of all students finished high school by age 24 in 1991, some after a varied high school career of leaving and reentering school. There are also programmatic consequences of this for the DOE and for local school divisions. For example, the development of community-based programs for older youth who are unlikely to reenter a traditional high school setting may be worthy of consideration. These community-based programs could serve as a bridge to high school completion for students who otherwise will be unlikely to complete a high school education or its equivalent.

In considering the dropout data reported in this chapter, one question that cannot be answered at this time is, "What is contributing to the decline in dropout rates among white students but not minority students?" For example, Table 4 shows the greatest decline in dropout rate is among whites, while the percentage of Hispanic dropouts has doubled. School divisions need to examine ways of insuring that minorities are appropriately targeted for dropout prevention services and that early intervention and alternative school programs have culturally competent program designs and p ocedures.

CHAPTER II
THE EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION

The Virginia YES project was initiated during the 1989-90 school year. Following the creation of the DOE's Research and Evaluation division in early 1991, an evaluation of Project YES began in July 1991. The study consists of two components - an annual statewide survey and an annual case study of seven YES programs. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the implementation of the evaluation.

HOW IS PROJECT YES BEING EVALUATED?

Three assumptions were made in 1991 by the evaluation team in developing the evaluation strategy. These assumptions were based upon the notion that the study must be designed in a way that would facilitate local and state planning, policy-making, and assessment. They are as follows:

1. The evaluation should determine what schools are doing in relation to the at-risk population.

2. Every effort will be made to

   a) assess DOE practices and models for intervention related to the at-risk population

   b) assess local school practices and program models

   c) evaluate the effectiveness of the DOE consultative model in improving local policies and programs.

3. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be used as evidence to answer the evaluation questions.

These assumptions have guided the actual evaluation, described in the following section of this report.

The reason for using both evaluation components - survey and case study - is to provide a basis for comparing and verifying findings from each approach, thus increasing the validity of what is learned. Quantitative and qualitative data from the survey provide a statewide perspective on Project YES. Interviews with school staff, faculty, parents, community members, and students ensure that findings are grounded in the everyday life of schools and the community. Their perceptions provide an understanding of the actual program that is not available through survey data. These kinds of data provide answers to questions such as what do faculty, staff, and students consider to be the most important consequences of implementing Project YES; what it is like to be a student or

staff member in a school implementing this program; and what are the perceived facts about at-risk students. Combined with quantitative data from the statewide survey, this multiple-method approach leads to findings not possible through the use of any single approach.

Fundamental to the evaluation approach is the concept of interdisciplinary teams. This approach broke down barriers between DOE and local program and evaluation staffs, thus ensuring that the study would be meaningful on both levels. Team members include staff from five DOE divisions, two local school divisions, higher education, and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.

Statewide Survey

In May 1992 the evaluation team developed and distributed a 17-item survey to the 103 school divisions receiving Project YES funds during the 1991-92 school year (See Appendix G). The survey requested both quantitative and qualitative data. Questions were asked about parental and community involvement, Project YES program implementation, effective and ineffective strategies, and frequency and type of interaction between Project YES staff and various community agencies and programs.

One purpose of the evaluation study is to stimulate evaluation practices at the division level, thereby encouraging the program staff to reflect upon the program and modify policy and practice as needed. As part of the fall 1991 survey, school divisions were asked to submit evaluation questions for the 1991-92 school year. Outcome data were then collected in June 1992.

Of the 103 surveys distributed, 94 (91%) were returned to the DOE and were tabulated and included as findings in this interim report. Nine surveys were not returned due to a lack of staff who could complete the surveys on time.

Case Study

The case study is a specific way of collecting, organizing, and analyzing data. Cases refer to individuals, programs, institutions, or groups. In this instance, the case study involves the Project YES program in seven school divisions; however, the entire school or division is included in the analyses, when appropriate. For example, while interview data regarding dropouts may focus on the implementation of Project YES, division-level data regarding dropouts may be reported to demonstrate the extent to which the implementation of the school division's overall dropout prevention efforts have affected the dropout rate.

When the decision about the unit of analysis was made, the evaluation team developed criteria for selecting the sample

programs. While a random sample allows generalizations to be made about some larger population, purposeful sampling - the approach used in this study - permits the collection of in-depth, detailed information about Project YES programs ranging from size to wealth and kinds of programs. However, generalizations about programs are prohibited when this type of sample is used. Instead, generalizations about ideas about programs are encouraged. These ideas can then be studied in the survey data and in depth in each Project YES program.

In its study, the evaluation team selected Project YES programs conducted in small, medium, and large school divisions, those in different geographical regions of the state, those that served a variety of grade spans, those that offer a wide range of services and program prototypes (i.e. alternative schools, parent education programs), and those that varied in wealth and ethnicity. As noted by Patton (1980:101), with limited resources and time, "Decisionmakers and evaluators think through what cases they could learn most from, and those are the cases selected for the study."

In the fall of 1991, the Project YES evaluation team developed a list of 15 programs that met the desired criteria, contacted the Project YES coordinator for each program to obtain an understanding of how the program was implemented in each division, and selected seven programs to participate in the case study. One division withdrew from the study in early October and was replaced by another division in the same geographical region of the state. Because of limited resources, the case study was limited to seven schools to conduct an in-depth study in a larger number of schools.

The intent of the evaluation team was <u>not</u> to select Project YES programs that necessarily were the most effective in serving at-risk students. However, by the time the study is completed it is anticipated that the principles and practices of effective programs may be derived. Although studying a small number of cases does not technically permit broad generalizations, logical generalizations can sometimes be made from the evidence produced.

One elementary school, one middle school, one junior high, one high school, and three alternative schools are included in the sample. Various program prototypes and instructional approaches are implemented in the seven schools. Appendix H provides a brief overview of how Project YES is being implemented in each of the seven schools.

During the first two weeks of October 1991, teams of two or three members visited each of the seven schools. Interviews were conducted at each school with the Project YES coordinator, the school principal, one counselor, and one teacher. Data from these site visits were incorporated into the first interim report (Department of Education, 1991).

In May and June 1992, site visits were made again to the case study schools. Two or three Project YES evaluation team members participated in each site visit, and the following activities were conducted:

1. Individual interviews were conducted with the superintendent, the Project YES coordinator, the principal, a counselor, and a teacher.

2. Focus groups were conducted with parents of students in the Project YES program. Parents were selected by the Project YES coordinator. Questions for the focus group were directed toward parental involvement and how it might be improved.

3. Focus groups were conducted with community members selected by the Project YES coordinator. Examples of participants in the focus groups included juvenile probation officers, mentors, social service staff members, business representatives, and other citizens. Questions for the focus group were related to community involvement in the schools and how it might be improved.

4. The case study schools were asked to involve students in the evaluation by asking them to prepare a presentation about the program. They were told that the presentation should highlight the benefits and limitations of the program for students and could involve a videotape, a skit, or simply a group discussion. This was a way to learn what the program meant for the students and how they chose to portray it to the DOE and the legislature. Videotapes were made for four programs and a fifth developed several skits about life in their community and school. A sixth program chose to have an open discussion about the program, and the seventh did not participate because the focus of the program was on parent training for the parents of elementary students.

Appendix G provides the interview guides used for the individual interviews and the focus groups. The interview guide listed questions and issues to be explored during the interview. The questions and issues were not intended to be used as tightly structured sets of questions to produce a range of likely responses. Rather, the purpose was to ensure that each interviewer asked for the same information. Consistency was important since six team members visited the Project YES programs and conducted the interviews. The interview guides also helped ensure the best use of the limited time available for each interview.

Prior to the interviews, the purpose of the study was explained to each respondent, and permission was requested to record the interview. Tape recording was an indispensable procedure, since it did not "tune-out" conversations, and it allowed the interviewer to

be more attentive to the interview (Patton, 1980). Tapes were transcribed for detailed analysis.

The approach used for conducting the focus groups was based upon Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research (Krueger, 1988). The purpose of the focus group was explained to participants, permission was obtained to record the interview, and tapes were transcribed for detailed analysis.

Data Analysis

Information from the statewide survey was reviewed by DOE personnel during the fall of 1992, and the division Project YES coordinator was contacted if data were missing or appeared to be incorrect. Data were then processed on computer, and descriptive statistical procedures were performed.

Data from each of the case study interviews with school staff and faculty were transcribed, along with the group interviews with students. This resulted in 289 pages of data upon which a content analysis was performed. The interview data were read and analyzed to facilitate the search for patterns and themes within a particular program or across programs. Themes are defined as general ideas disclosed in or through the analysis of interview data, statistics, and other information about how programs work to help children and adolescents achieve academic competence and success in life.

SUMMARY

The evaluation strategy developed for this study was determined by the questions asked. Both quantitative and qualitative data from the statewide survey provide information about program implementation and the basis for comparing findings from the case study component. The case study component provides in-depth information about staff, faculty, and students' perceptions of the program.

CHAPTER III
WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT PROJECT YES THAT ALLOWS US TO SURMISE THAT IT MAKES A CONTRIBUTION TO LOWERING THE DROPOUT RATE?

INTRODUCTION

The basic evaluation questions are 1) Has Virginia's dropout rate decreased? 2) Did the $10,000,000 for Project YES bring this about? 3) Can it be shown what a school division should do if it wants to lower (and continue to suppress) its dropout rate? and 4) Are state funds necessary to accomplish this objective?

The dropout rate has declined, no doubt for several reasons. These include a poor economy, higher military enlistment criteria coupled with a drop in federal military spending, and most likely, Project YES and other state and local dropout prevention efforts.

Based upon the lessons learned from the first two years of the evaluation, it is clear that combinations of preventive activities in the home, the community, and the school are necessary to reduce the risk of students leaving school early. That is, no one single school "program" or "effective practice," by itself, will substantially reduce student risk to dropping out of school. This is clear. What, then, does reduce the dropout rate? It is very likely a combination of intentional efforts and larger "social forces" (e.g., employment possibilities, family structure, local patterns of adult and youth violence, etc.). The intentional efforts cover at least five domains, framed here as hypotheses.

The approach chosen was to frame five hypotheses about how school divisions can reduce their dropout rate, using the national research literature on dropouts and data collected during the first two years of this study. This is the framework for answering the questions about whether Project YES works and how does it work.

HOW DO THE PROGRAMS CONTRIBUTE TO REDUCING THE DROPOUT RATE?

Hypothesis 1: Effective Parent Involvement Programs Contribute to the Prevention and Control of Dropping Out.

Research has repeatedly shown that children whose parents are "involved" in their education will very likely do better in school than those whose parents do not support them and "what the school is trying to do." It seems certain that parental support matters in school success. Issue closed? Not yet!

It is clear, too, that it matters how parents are "involved" with their children and with the school, and when they are involved, during their children's school career, from pre-school through high school graduation. The nature of parental involvement no doubt follows the broad patterns of development and maturation in their children. All of these, and related issues, are grounded to

individual children, adolescents, and youth, and to a parent-school "partnership."

A second level of parent involvement is that of parents as a group and the school as an organization. What does it mean on this level to talk about parental involvement in the schools? Typically, it has meant parent participation in a parents' association such as the PTA. It has meant involvement of parents as "boosters" of school programs, e.g., athletics and music. It has meant schools working with and through school-parent groups to obtain more money for schools, to raise funds for specific projects, e.g., new band uniforms or computers, and to be a forum for "reaching parents" and informing them about school programs and recruiting them as volunteers in classrooms and other projects. Parents rarely use these opportunities to probe school and schooling unless there has been a crisis - suicide, harassment, molestation, teacher firing, or other event.

The Data

Data from the statewide survey and the case study suggest that the schools see parent involvement as a valuable aid in preparing children for school (i.e., school readiness); supporting the school, e.g., by helping the children with homework; and being "responsible" by actively participating in formal "open houses," "parents' nights" and parent-teacher organizations. Rare, but increasing, is the school that sees its role as facilitating parent development, e.g., family life education, education in parenting, or enabling parents to continue their schooling. Project YES staff often bring these interests and programs to the school and in the process, expand the traditional school toward a more effective model of community education.

Based upon focus groups held with parents at each of the seven case study schools, some parents do not perceive that their children are being responded to by school staff in ways that recognize the multiple problems their children are coping with when they come to school. One parent described how she and her son had recently relocated, there had been several deaths in the family and he was undergoing major physical changes developmentally. She commented that...

> I don't really think the school looks at the fact that he's just a thirteen-year-old defiant child, and right now I just don't know what to do with him. They have a thousand and some kids in the school, and many of them are having some kind of trauma. If it's not trauma from the community then it's trauma in the family, and if it's not that it's their own personal world that they're trying to deal with. It all blends together.

> Then we have parents who are not interested, or parents with the wrong attitudes. I'm working with the principal here to develop a volunteer program and see if we can pull in the community to help some of these kids. Let the community come in and help with the program. There are not enough staff to deal with all of these children. One teacher cannot handle thirty-seven children for an hour and be able to pay attention to their unique needs.

Missing in the data are alternate conceptions of parent-school relationships, models of how parents can try to change the schools to meet their own needs and those of their children. Parental contribution to school budget-making, to sensitizing school staff to local cultures and subcultures, and to being resources in the classroom are given only slight attention, at best. Usually missing is any effort to educate parents on how to be effective advocates for their children in the schools and elsewhere in the community.

Even though the conception of parent involvement in Project YES programs is limited overall, there are some programs in Virginia, e.g., Richmond public schools, that provide excellent examples of cooperative projects involving students and parents. An exceptional guide to parent-school relations is now available and could become a set of practice principles on parent-school relations (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1992).

A Model of Parent Involvement

High quality work in the field of parent involvement is being done by Joyce Epstein at Johns Hopkins University. Her practical understanding of parent involvement suggests concrete, practical actions, with related outcomes for parents, students, and schools. This is useful work using an analytic perspective.

Table I provides Epstein's model of parent involvement and shows that "the five types of involvement occur in different places, require different materials and processes, and lead to different outcomes" (Epstein, 1989:26). Reflection on these types show that some are far easier (#2, 3, 5) to achieve than others (#1, 4) and that the discourse on parents and the schools is typically imprecise and accusatory. Epstein's analysis creates the possibility of true conversation by schools, among parents, and crucially, between parents and schools about mutual expectations of involvement. Appendix I provides a copy of an article summarizing a conversation with Joyce Epstein about this model.

TABLE I
EPSTEIN'S MODEL OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Examples of Practices to Promote the Five Types of Parent Involvement

Type 1 Parenting	Type 2 Communicating	Type 3 Volunteering	Type 4 Learning at Home	Type 5 Representing Other Parents
Help all Families Establish Home Environments to Support Learning	**Design More Effective Forms of Communications to Reach Parents**	**Recruit and Organize Parent Help and Support**	**Provide Ideas to Parents on How to Help Child at Home**	**Recruit and Train Parent Leaders**
A Few Examples of Practices of Each Type				
School provides suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level	Teachers conduct conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-up as needed	School volunteer program or class; parent and committee of volunteers for each room	Information to parents on skills in each subject at each grade. Regular homework schedule (once a week or twice a month) that requires students to discuss schoolwork at home	Participation and leadership in PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, including advisory councils or committees such as curriculum, safety, and personnel
Workshops, videotapes, computerized phone messages on parenting and child-rearing issues at each grade level	Translators for language-minority families	Parent Room or Parent Club for volunteers and resources for parents	Calendars with daily topics for discussion by parents and students	Independent advocacy groups
	Weekly or monthly folders of student work are sent home and reviewed and comments returned	Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers		

Survey data from Project YES programs and interview data from seven school sites show that Virginia schools include all five types of involvement in their ideals and in practice. Action is most often given to types 2, 3, and then 5; more talk than action is given to types 1 and 4, both among school professionals and among parents participating in the focus groups.

Hypothesis 2: Effective Community Involvement Programs Contribute to the Prevention and Control of Dropping Out.

Community truly means many different things, including a place; a sense of belonging in or to a place or group; others who think and/or act similarly; and/or people who want similar things. In this model, community means first, a place, and second, the organized as well as the informal groups and associations that are in that place. Some of these work for the community and for the common good.

The Data

Results from the statewide survey show an expected range of self-reported school perceptions and activities involving "school-community relations."

The dominant language in Virginia for discussing these relations is "partnerships." Most of them seem to refer to reaching out to the community and inviting citizens to "give assistance to the schools." The basic theme seems to be that it is the school's responsibility to educate students and the school wants help from the community in doing this.

Most schools report that their relations with the community are good and are getting better; a few schools see themselves as doing very fine work. Typical examples of good relations are partnerships, community volunteers in schools, community members sitting on school and school-community committees, special events, booster clubs, and membership on community interagency teams in the human services. Adopt-A-School programs and special grants to schools are other examples.

Exceptional relations were reported by several schools, and this self-assessment seems to be warranted. One school has a Home-School Connections Coordinator, while another has an Office of Educational Partnerships. Other schools involve the community in their work on special issues such as drugs.

One school said it very well: "They know us", while another invites the community into "all aspects of school life." The superintendent of one of the case study schools described an ideal relationship between the school and the community as follows:

> I think an ideal relationship between the school and community would be such that the people in the school division understand the needs of the community and the students, their families, and the kind of society that exists. This varies from community to community in Virginia and everywhere, and the community should understand the reality of schools today, some of the problems school people deal with and relate to in dealing with young people. It is different now than in the past. There needs to be an understanding on both sides and a commitment to work for young people on the part of the community and the schools.

The Project YES evaluation team believes that dropout prevention is more effective with youth when it is embedded in the community. One form of embeddedness is interaction with community-based organizations (e.g., business partners), human service agencies (e.g., health agencies), and nonformal youth organizations (e.g., 4-H, Scouts). One way to understand relations between Project YES

and the community is to examine its interactions with local agencies and programs. This was done in the statewide survey discussed next.

Project YES in Interaction With the Community

As a part of the mailed survey of Project YES programs, coordinators were asked to complete a table indicating the frequency and type of interaction that their Project YES staff had with a variety of local agencies and programs. Table II presents the frequency and type of interaction by agency and program. Data from focus groups with community members from each of the case study schools supplement these data and are consistent with the survey data.

TABLE II

FREQUENCY AND TYPE OF INTERACTION BETWEEN PROJECT YES STAFF

AND VARIOUS AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS

N = 94 SCHOOL DIVISIONS*

1991-92

Agency or Program	Type of Interaction						
	Referral	Money	Info	Equip.	Facilities	Other	TOTAL
Guidance and Counseling	68	4	61	11	17	12	173
Dept. of Human & Social Service	80	7	62	2	12	7	170
Dept. of Mental Health & Substance Abuse	68	6	60	4	16	8	162
Court Services Unit	70	3	52	2	12	8	147
Health Dept.	66	2	57	3	9	6	143
Job Training Partnership Act	44	14	38	20	12	6	134
Office of Special Education	49	5	48	11	13	7	133
Business Partnerships	31	16	35	12	16	12	122
Literacy Programs	39	3	35	4	4	5	90
Non-Formal Youth Agencies	33	3	37	1	10	5	89
Community Action Programs	31	3	30	5	7	2	78
Office on Youth	21	5	28	4	6	4	68
Women, Infant, and Childrens' Programs	33	3	25	2	3	1	67
Shelters for Abused Families	33	2	17	2	7	3	64
Adolescent Health Clinic	32	1	20	2	5	1	61
Office of Housing	21	2	16	2	3	2	46
Office on Women	12	2	10	2	2	1	29
TOTAL	731	81	631	89	154	90	1776

*Since Project YES Staff members interacted with more than one agency or program, table totals are duplicated counts.

Overall, 1,776 interactions were reported between Project YES staff members and community-based agencies and programs, including business partnerships. Public and voluntary agencies and programs are included. Of these, 731 (41%) were referrals, 631 (35%) were for information and 154 (9%) included the use of joint facilities.

The remainder were divided almost equally into fiscal exchanges, joint use of equipment and "other."

Looking at the types of agencies and programs, those used most often were guidance and counseling (173 interactions, 10%), the Virginia Department of Human and Social Services (170 interactions, 10%) and the Virginia Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse (162 interactions, 9%).[3]

Diagnostically, these data indicate the kinds of agencies and programs Project YES could be encouraged to work with more closely. Also possible is the use of these data to enhance the integration of Project YES into the larger community, including its services. An example is more active fiscal solicitation from business partners.

Considering the source of the information reported, the number of interactions seems relatively low, suggesting that there is (a) little perceived need for outside help; (b) little in terms of programs or services available or perceived to be available outside Project YES for them to connect to; and/or (c) barriers to connecting with these programs or services.

Training, too can be suggested by these data.

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[3]These are duplicated counts, self-reported by each school division on the statewide survey of Project YES coordinators. The Project YES coordinators may or may not be fully aware of the extent of the interactions with community agencies and programs. Thus, these data are used simply to suggest that the flow of services between and among Project YES and the community is of vital concern and worthy of potential support, even legislative encouragement. More detailed information about this topic can be collected, given what was learned this year.

Toward An Integrated, Whole Community Model of Dropout Prevention

For the purpose of illustrating the possibilities for improving community involvement in Project YES programs, Epstein's model of parent involvement was extended by us to focus on community involvement and schools, as shown in Table III.

TABLE III
TOWARD AN INTEGRATED, WHOLE COMMUNITY MODEL OF DROPOUT PREVENTION

MODEL	TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT				
	1	2	3	4	5
Epstein	Parenting	Communicating	Volunteering	Learning at Home	Representing Other Parents
Community	Caring Community	Community Organizing	Voluntary Involvement	Community Consultation and Services	Community Involvement
Description	Support a community culture of justice and caring	Support a community structure characterized by an array of interactions, formal and informal, and communication channels between and among groups, agencies and the schools	Recruit and organize support of a wide variety of organizations, groups, and individuals to help school	Provide ideas and services to school	Recruit and train community leaders to help schools

In this model, each type is another aspect of community-school relations, with the school claiming responsibility for enhancing community structure and everyday life as part of the process of community education. Reciprocally, the community accepts responsibility for being more than the banker and the source of employees of the school. It claims its moral responsibility for its children, adolescents and youth, and acts to support their healthy development and effective schooling.

Using this model, most interactions reported on the survey of Project YES coordinators were of Type 4 - providing ideas and services. Some attention was given to recruiting and training leaders who could help schools prevent dropouts (Type 3), with no work in types 1 and 2.

Communities and Schools: Toward an Integrated Model

There is recognition for and apparent acceptance of the need and requirement for, as Project YES staff might say, "community input

into the schools" and for partnerships, by which the schools mean the community helping the school do its work. Missing is a powerful alternate conception: the school's students are the community's youth, and the school is the community agent for schooling and learning. This seems to be an alien idea for school professionals, yet one not actually too distant from their own conceptions. Community size, income, history, and culture clearly influence the kind, degree, and formality of school-community relations.

Needed is a broader, richer conception of school-community relations; more sharing of existing efforts by schools; training in how to think about, design, implement, and assess such work; and inducements to encourage and support school-community relations efforts.

The schools' perspective of the importance of the Scouts, the Y's, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, FFA, and other nonformal youth organizations is also limited. These are important groups in many communities, when they are viewed as places where "kids" learn to be "kids", and have a chance for healthy development through appropriately supervised activities. This range of activities has been called nonformal education.

A strong case can be made that nonformal youth organizations, particularly those that utilize experiential education processes, must become key players in any community-based model of dropout prevention.

Adding together the ideas and findings on school, parent and community involvement for dropout prevention still leaves room for deeper sociocultural and socioeconomic intervention. It is clear that unless communities and families change in positive ways, there is little hope that there will be a sharp reduction in the number of children who enter school as, or come to be, at-risk to school failure and early school leaving. <u>Dropout prevention, control, and rehabilitation must become the responsibility of the whole community</u>.

Needed is a model of community-based prevention, control, and rehabilitation that weaves together the school, parents, and community. This is far more than a school's effective in-school program or practice.

Three pieces (at least) are missing from current efforts to lower the risk of students dropping out of school. One is a systematic effort at community building; the second is a structure to rationalize, coordinate, and integrate existing community efforts; and the third is the training of parents and other citizens on <u>how</u> to help their children, the schools and the community itself. This latter is a sphere of community-based training and education, while the first two are part of <u>community development</u>. Together, the

three can work toward community revitalization in the service of children, youth, and families.

Expressed schematically, community education for dropout prevention, control, and rehabilitation functions as a bridge between the school, parents, and community.

In practical terms, parents can learn how to build a home environment that supports healthy development and learning (Type 1), how to help their children learn (Type 4), and how to be more effective parents (combined Types 1 and 4). These actions lead toward prevention.

In practical terms, parents can learn how to revitalize their community by using a variety of techniques of forming groups.

In practical terms, a structure could be designed to rationalize, coordinate, and integrate all community services -- school sponsored, school-based and others -- in preventing school dropouts.

Discussion

Project YES cannot adequately do the job alone. It must reach out to community-based agencies and programs if it wants to meet the needs of its students (and their families). This is being done, to some extent, at least. The method used to collect and analyze data in this survey did not permit an assessment of the degree to which community-based programs and services are available to each student in need. Case (student) sampling would make that possible. Remembering the obvious point that divisions in large urban areas have more services available than those in smaller urban and rural areas, this too must be considered. Here, it is not.

On a more analytical level, these data suggest that some Project YES faculty and staff recognize their students' non-education needs and seek to have these met inside and outside of the school. Referrals for outside services are expected to show marked increases when school faculty and staff learn more about students' and families' needs and the availability and use of community-based services. If this education is provided, then the appropriateness of interagency work can be assessed. Now, the focus is on the amount and kind of such interaction from Project YES to outside sources. Flows to Project YES from community groups and agencies should also be mapped, if a more complete picture is wanted.

Hypothesis 3: Effective Early Detection and Monitoring of Social-Psychological Indicators Contributes to the Prevention and Control of Dropping Out.

Anecdotal evidence from the case study data indicate that early identification of students can lead to reduced likelihood of

dropping out of school. In each of the case study schools, students are closely monitored to identify academic and social-psychological indicators of being at risk of early school leaving.

There is no evidence that, in the long term, children who are identified and responded to early continue to be at lower risk to early school leaving throughout their school careers. However, it is reasonable to suspect that early and continued developmentally appropriate intervention over the student's school career will lower his or her risk to early school leaving.

It must also be explained that prevention can begin at any developmental moment, and intervention during elementary school does not preclude the necessity for prevention at other developmental levels, such as the transition from middle school to high school.

Finally, it must be remembered that true prevention for most students at-risk will only occur when there are changes in their everyday lives in and out of school, in the family, neighborhood, and community. These are the forces that contribute to a student's risk status, particularly when the school is not organized to meet the education and social-psychological needs of these students, their families, and the community.

Hypothesis 4: Responding With Different Alternatives to Youth With Different Kinds and Degrees of Risk Contributes to the Prevention and Control of Dropping Out.

The population of students at-risk to early school leaving is not homogeneous, either in background or in how risk shows itself. The population of at-risk students varies also by school culture, including student culture, and community (LeCompte, 1991; Fine, 1991; Wax, 1964; Solomon, 1992).

Risk is also a relative term (low to high), and varies by developmental stage and school level, thus requiring school divisions to implement policies and programs that take these dimensions of risk into account.

This fact was recognized in the Project YES legislation, which encourages locally designed response and is illustrated by the seven Project YES case study programs. Thus, it is expected that there would be a variety of locally created practices for which claims of effectiveness would be made by local programs and are demonstrated in a lower event dropout rate. This was found, with 57 (56%) of divisions with Project YES programs in 1991-92 showing a reduction in the event dropout rate from 1990-91 to 1991-92. Of those showing a decrease, four (4%) decreased the dropout rate more

than 2 percent; 15 (15%), 1 to 2 percent; and 37 (37%) between .1 and 1.0 percent (See Appendix F).[4]

Thus, the overall claim of effectiveness is substantiated, in general.

More specifically, the general claim of effectiveness rests on the implementation of locally effective practices. However, it is not possible to separate the activities and practices that had the most influence on the dropout rate because of the schools' programs which include a variety of interventions, activities, and other efforts.

YES' Most Effective Strategies: Their Own View

Examples of locally effective practices reported on the statewide survey provide examples of the range and type of interventions being implemented as part of Project YES. When asked to list the most effective strategies of the program as part of the statewide survey, 47 strategies were reported, using a random sample of half of the surveys. The most frequently reported effective strategy was alternative education programs (10 programs). Individualization of instruction was second (7), followed by mentoring programs (4). Other reported effective practices included peer/cross age-teaching, computer-assisted instruction, and individual counselor interventions. Note that no one of these is new to the field (although it may be new to a school), nor is any one by itself so effective as to reduce and continue to reduce year after year early school leaving. Again, a combination of efforts is crucial.

Among all those interviewed for the case study, there was consensus that one of the most effective strategies for students at-risk to school failure is having someone to talk to about personal difficulties. One staff person interviewed commented that...

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[4]Thirty-three percent of school divisions not receiving Project YES funds in 1991-92 show a reduction in the dropout rate from 1990-91 to 1991-92. Sixty percent show an increase and seven percent show no change. Comparisons between school divisions receiving Project YES funds and those that do not should not be made because of two factors. First, school divisions receiving Project YES funds are those with the highest dropout rate because of the funding formula. Second, by statute, school divisions receiving Project YES funds are required to include dropout retrieval as one component of the program. This can result in an increase in the dropout rate because high-risk students who dropout and reenter the program several times during one school year are counted as dropouts each time they withdraw from school.

> Division wide, in this school, kids have another person outside of the academic arena that they can go to and talk with. It is almost like another counselor, but this counselor is not tied to academics. It's more of "what is the problem as you see it, how is it that I can help you," whether it is here in this building, coming to your home and talking to you and your parents or meeting you after school or on a Saturday to discuss a problem of concern. Even though it is school-based, the parameters extend way beyond school. The students have a person who is part of the staff, but who is not looked upon as the teacher or the counselor, but almost as a buddy. An adult buddy that is here primarily to help with the problem that I am having. And we have a number of kids who need this...kids who feel threatened by talking to the school principal and will not open up with him. They are reluctant to with the school counselor because they have seen the counselor from the first grade on up through seventh or eighth grade, and counselors are always connected with the school. And they see him talking with the principal and other teachers, so there is some guarded feeling there. It is not as guarded with the YES counselor. She is more of an adult big sister, big brother type of effort.

Hypothesis 5: Program-Based Monitoring and Evaluation Should Result in Administrative Decisions That Contribute to the Prevention and Control of Dropping Out.

There is strong anecdotal evidence from the case study that Project YES funds have raised school consciousness about youth at-risk of early school leaving by increasing attentiveness to emergent patterns of school absences, lateness, suspensions, and poor academic performance. This is operational program monitoring and evaluation. A school's programmatic response, based on its own data, is crucial for effective prevention and control, i.e., for data based, "grounded," program development.[5]

The Data

When asked to develop a number of evaluation questions for their program for the 1991-92 school year, Project YES staff responded by submitting questions/objectives designed to monitor their performance in 22 domains. The five domains they most frequently monitored were increasing attendance (40, 39%), reducing discipline referrals and suspensions (38, 37%), reducing the school division's dropout rate (30, 29%), increasing achievement test scores (26,

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[5]It should be noted that such grounded program development can be based on faulty data interpretation, which later data should disclose.

25%), and improving grades (25, 24%). Other evaluation questions/objectives included increasing parent involvement (17, 17%) and increasing promotion rates (16, 16%).

Typically, school divisions reported improvements in each of the domains evaluated. However, while many divisions were very attentive to collecting the necessary data to answer the evaluation questions, there is a need to provide technical assistance to Project YES programs to refine the evaluation questions and establish local and statewide consistency in the methods of data collection and reporting. Few programs have the necessary resources to employ an evaluation staff to assist in the design and implementation of their own local evaluation. School divisions that are most attentive to evaluating the program, such as Nelson County, contract with university staff to design and implement the evaluation on a regular basis, or have their own evaluation units.

The data can be read another way, too. Each domain discloses what the local group thinks is most important to accomplish programmatically (evaluation process criterion) if the larger goal of dropout prevention is to be met.

SUMMARY

It seems highly likely that schools can contribute significantly to reducing local dropout rates, all things being equal - which they are not! -- if they are attentive to and active in <u>at least</u> these five domains.

Very likely, action in only one or even several of these domains will lower effectiveness. It is <u>not</u> possible to suggest which programmatic domains are more crucial, or in what order actions should be introduced, or in what "dose" each program should be given, to achieve what effects. And it may never be possible to do this.

Yet, the broad principle is clear: Multiple actions, locally-shaped, and dealing simultaneously with these five domains, at minimum, is necessary.

This constitutes a minimal scheme of effective practice.

HOW ELSE MIGHT PROJECT YES CONTRIBUTE TO DROPOUT PREVENTION?

Vast, but insufficient funds are allocated regularly for at-risk students by legislators, foundations, and youth-serving agencies. These funds buy services by an array of adults employed in agencies across the domains of education, juvenile justice, health and mental health, and public welfare. Current levels of funding to serve these youth and their families are inadequate and will continue to be even more so, as the numbers of these students grow

due to poverty, violence, chemical misuse, and the changing demographics of the nation.

Here a simple point is made about the everyday politics of school decision making on the levels of superintendent (system), principal (school) and teacher (classroom). There is a constant need to deal with a variety of "crises" and issues that vie for attention at all levels of decision making. "Decisions" is the work that structures the everyday worlds of education in the schools. This also characterizes state levels of education, at least at the deputy superintendent and superintendent levels.

These conflicting issues and need for decisions provide the context for understanding, in part, what monies for at-risk students accomplish. Money keeps attention on a population of students and ensures that they maintain the status of "problem," of "having to be responded to." Typically, in Project YES, the students responded to are those who simply need more attention, more time to complete their assignments, and someone they can talk to when they have a problem, as illustrated by the student quotations at the beginning of this report.

Funds grant access to the decision makers and ensure that efforts are made to address the "at-risk issue." By buying attention and access, funds in effect lobby on behalf of the issue and the students, and by doing so, raise the chances that "something will be done."

CHAPTER IV
WHAT ELSE CAN PROJECT YES PROGRAMS PAY ATTENTION TO THAT COULD REASONABLY BE EXPECTED TO PREVENT AND CONTROL DROPPING OUT?

INTRODUCTION

Based upon two years of data from the case study schools and the research literature, eight topics were identified that are believed by the Project YES evaluation team to be worthy of consideration by the Project YES staff, DOE teams responsible for providing technical assistance to Project YES programs, the Joint Subcommittee Studying School Dropout and Ways to Promote the Development of Self-Esteem Among Youth and Families, and others interested in the improvement of Project YES.

SELECTED ISSUES IN THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF DROPPING OUT

School Counselors

School counselors could be among the most important players in dropout prevention and control and rehabilitation; in some schools they are, most notably those schools that offer alternative education programs where case loads are reduced. Elsewhere, schools are too overburdened by totally unrealistic work loads to be able to counsel effectively students who are at relatively high risk to school failure. Typically, it is the school counselor who is the school's major link to community services, and this task too is difficult in light of current work loads. The role of the counselor in Project YES should be examined, as should the level of funding for this position.

The Concept of Risk

This year's survey of Project YES coordinators asked whether the following three categories of at-risk learners could be found in their schools. More than 80 percent of school divisions reported the existence of each of the following three categories of at-risk students.

a) "transitional at-risk students" - Those who miss school because of a long illness or death in the family or need to stay at home to care for a sick sibling or child (80% of Project YES programs reported the existence of this group).

b) "tuned-out students" - Those described as not caring, who are not serious about learning, or did not care about school for a variety of reasons (97% of Project YES programs reported the existence of this group).

c) "dead-eyes youth" - Those with blank stares on their faces, often due to severe traumatization such as physical abuse (87% of Project YES programs reported the existence of this group).

Several divisions reported that homeless youth are a new risk population. The draft criteria for the identification of at-risk youth found in Appendix E provide the flexibility for school divisions to identify students for services that meet the needs of each of these groups. School divisions should be encouraged to examine periodically their criteria for identification to ensure that new populations of students are not being ignored because they do not meet the current criteria used to identify students for services.

A Developmental Perspective

Human development is a valid and powerful perspective that has clear and direct implications for Project YES programs. Recommendations in eight policy domains provided in the first interim evaluation report provide examples of the application of a human development perspective to the reduction of early school leaving. Yet, virtually no survey or interview data indicated that school professionals took a human development perspective or used developmental interventions. This body of knowledge may be known, but professionals rarely discuss students explicitly as children, adolescents, and youth, or plan and implement programs using a developmental perspective. In any event, children and Project YES programs are limited when these developmental insights and programs are ignored. Possibilities for incorporating developmentally oriented programs into Project YES programs include experiential learning and peer and cross-age teaching and counseling.

The Process of Dropping Out

Usually the question asked is why do some youth drop out of school, while others do not. Consider asking how some youth leave school, while others do not. The processes resulting in a youth leaving school early and becoming a dropout may be relatively easy to learn for each school and may be relatively easy to influence in ways that reduce dropout numbers and rates. Consideration given by Project YES staff to whether there are actions by school personnel that foster the choice to leave school is one example of how to examine this process. School and student culture are other documented sources of how students drop out of school.

Training

Two years of interview data in the case study schools show that there is considerable need for training, especially among non-Project YES program staff and faculty, to include current knowledge about at-risk students and community and school responses to their needs. Training in the areas of human development and parent and community involvement are two domains that are neglected by most school divisions. A significant obstacle for many school division staff and faculty is the existence of division policies that restrict participation in opportunities for professional

development. The development of comprehensive training for school division staff should be given serious consideration by the DOE team responsible for managing Project YES.

Involvement of College and University Students in Project YES Programs

Many Project YES programs are located in communities with undergraduate and graduate programs in education, the social sciences, and human services. Collaborative efforts among school divisions and colleges, universities, and other postsecondary institutions has received little attention, yet has much potential for providing individualized attention to students enrolled in Project YES.

Homeless Youth

All school divisions participating in the case study reported the presence of homeless youth. Few have the necessary resources to provide even minimal services to these youth; typically, they receive assistance from Project YES staff after working hours and on weekends. Some school divisions reported that these students are unemployed and may become involved in illegal activities to support themselves, resulting in entanglement with the juvenile justice system. Services for homeless youth are typically a neglected area that requires special attention.

Visiting Teachers/Social Workers

Visiting teachers and social workers can provide essential services necessary to the success of programs for students at-risk to school failure. In addition to making home visits, visiting teachers and social workers assist in the coordination of a systematic effort toward community building, coordination and integration of human services and nonformal youth groups into the school's program and coordination with the school counselor. Developing parent involvement programs and serving as a child advocate are additional key activities. Their role should be further examined and consideration given to providing additional funding to ensure each YES program offers these services.

SUMMARY

Based upon the national research literature and two years of evaluation data from Project YES coordinators statewide and a case study of seven schools, eight topics are believed by the Project YES evaluation team to be worthy of further study. Each of these topics have implications for all YES programs. Research and attention to each topic could likely result in improved services for at-risk youth and their families.

CHAPTER V
WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD DRIVE FURTHER EVALUATION RESEARCH IN PROJECT YES?

INTRODUCTION

The following studies are suggested by both the national literature and the case study data and would contribute to further understanding of and effective policies and programs in local dropout prevention.

THE STUDIES

Model Program Diffusion

A basic, if unstated, strategy in most state funding is to find what programs seem to work (and why) and then to make these models available statewide. Crucial to this strategy is an understanding of how innovations are adopted, by whom, and under what conditions. This is a subject worthy of study.

Exemplary Programs

Some Project YES practices are beyond the range of usual school interventions. The Richmond public schools parent involvement program and Nelson County's alternative education program are examples of interventions that are worthy of close examination. These can be called exemplary innovations. Some effort should be made to look closely at these practices to determine their effectiveness and their potential for diffusion to other schools.

Disciplinary Practices and Dropouts

Little information is available on a statewide basis regarding the use of in- and out-of-school suspension and its relationship to dropping out. A study of the correlational factors in dropping out and school disciplinary referrals and suspensions should include a demographic analysis a well as an analysis of the impact of policy and procedures.

CHAPTER VI
WHAT DOES "EFFECTIVE PRACTICE" MEAN?

INTRODUCTION

Two very real questions involved in everyday decision-making always are, What works? and How much does it cost? Evaluation research is the method of choice for answering the first question. As with most social research methods, the complexity of the phenomena being studied determines the difficulty of finding a simple and unequivocal answer to the seemingly simple question, Does it work?

This chapter will discuss what has been learned during the first two years of the evaluation of Project YES programs that contributes to a better understanding of effective practice, propose how Project YES programs should be held accountable for the use of funds, and suggest ways the DOE can provide support for improving the effectiveness of Project YES programs.

WHAT MAKES PROJECT YES EFFECTIVE?

It is possible to show whether or not, and to what extent, dropout rates have declined in school divisions that have Project YES programs, but it is not possible to meet accepted scientific standards and still attribute cause in such dropout rates to Project YES.

In fact, it can be surmised whether or not the presence of Project YES has any effect on the dropout rate, but it cannot be demonstrated with scientific rigor exactly what part(s) of Project YES had what effect(s), how much, or for how long. There can be no "dose-effect" findings here.

However, it can be surmised that effective practice to prevent dropouts involves locally developed, active efforts to meet student needs simultaneously in multiple ways, including at least the following five domains:

1. Parent Involvement
2. Community Involvement
3. Early Detection and Monitoring of Social-Psychological Indicators
4. Responding With Different Alternatives to Youth With Different Kinds and Degrees of Risk
5. Monitoring and Evaluating the Program.

Further, it is highly likely that effective practice is an ongoing effort of that type, rather than a one-shot event or short-term project.

While there is considerable variation in the strategies used to reduce student risk to early school leaving and the need for a

combination of efforts on a long-term basis, it is possible to suggest criteria for effective programs and practices based upon two years of data reflected in this evaluation and the research literature. Epstein's model of effective parent involvement, as described earlier in this report, is one such example. Other proven practices are provided in the first interim evaluation report.

Support for these practices is also found in professional and scholarly literature (Sizer, 1985; Slavin, Karweit, and Madden, 1989; Wehlage, 1988; Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 1988; USDOE, 1990; USDOE, 1991).

Those characteristics of effective programs identified in the first interim evaluation report include the following. (Appendix J provides a description of each characteristic.)

1. The program is voluntary.
2. The program is individualized.
3. The program is small.
4. The program is real, in student terms.
5. Students are seen and responded to as people, and as youth.
6. The program has talented, trained, youth-focused staff.
7. Responsibility and power in the program are shared.
8. The program is accountable through formal evaluation.
9. The program engages the parents.
10. The program engages the larger community.
11. The program fits the varied needs of all students.

To these can now be added:

12. The effort must likely include a combination of a variety of approaches.

Effective practice to prevent school dropouts is the result of methods and techniques known to educators and youth development workers, rather than to miracle cures or any one technique. Effective practice seems to be pedagogically sound youth development practice.

Effective practice most likely resides in a combined world-view/perspective and action (program) where both must be present simultaneously.

Effective practice, then, is a point of view, with related clusters of mundane, well known activities across at least five domains of activity.

Even with all of this, no effective practice may ever eliminate early school leaving in any one year, or over several years. Given the "law of large numbers" and our actual world, there may always

be dropouts. However, some changes can be made in the overall dropout rate by the schools if there is a recognition of the contribution made to that rate by age, race/ethnicity, gender, and the like.

It is a recognized fact that children, families, and communities change. Consequently, it is meaningless to look for a solution to the dropout phenomena, once and for all. Every school, every day must be attentive and responsive to its children and their worlds. The result will be a lower rate of early school leaving.

Effective practice must include, at minimum, an effort by each school to monitor local conditions, students, school practices, and student culture and to use these data to develop sound hypotheses for action. This is a central necessity of effective practice, i.e., attentive, self-reflective practice. Without this, a program is simply not demonstrating professional-level work, and can never meet the test of effective practice.

Thus, the basis is set for program assessment and program evaluation that are discussed in the following pages.

HOW SHOULD PROJECT YES PROGRAMS BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE?

Project YES programs should be held accountable for the use of funds and for effectiveness. This model of data-based program development, management, and assessment can meet the practical test of ongoing local evaluation. But it must be supplemented by DOE guidelines that can ensure the use of comparable data for school divisions and a level of quality control. Regular reports to the community and to its students are other basic means of holding programs accountable.

At a minimum, each division should be held accountable for demonstrating how it uses in everyday practice information/data for program assessment, development, and management; how data about dropout prevention is a focus of this process; and the ongoing effects of their efforts on the dropout rate. All school divisions should be held accountable for identifying which of their practices are effective and which are not effective with students at-risk, their claims for each practice, and their reasons for retaining ineffective practices.

Beginning during the 1993-94 school year, Project YES will be piloting the use of a performance-based measurement system (PBMS) as a way of providing accountability to the General Assembly and the DOE. Specific requirements of the PBMS are now being developed by the DOE in cooperation with the Department of Planning and Budget and selected YES coordinators.

HOW CAN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CONTRIBUTE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF PROJECT YES?

One way of determining how the DOE could contribute to the improvement of Project YES was to ask program coordinators to respond to the following question on the statewide survey: "Are there state policies that are obstacles to keeping students enrolled in school through graduation?" Thirty-three percent reported there were not. The most frequently reported obstacle was the Literacy Testing Program (LTP) (20%), followed by attendance required until age 18 (10%) and increased graduation requirements (5%). Other perceived obstacles included the requirement of 150 clock hours of credit (4%) and the requirement that a student must withdraw from school to take the General Educational Development Test (GED) (4%). These data suggest topics for further investigation during the third year of the Project YES evaluation and also merit consideration by all Project YES personnel. Data from the DOE's LTP evaluation team will also provide a basis for assessing the extent that the LTP may be an obstacle to students completing high school.

These and other data from this evaluation should also be considered in developing a multi focused consultative effort by the DOE and school divisions. First, the DOE should offer training (or funds for it) to school divisions that want to adopt a practice, a data-based program assessment, or a planning and management model devoted to dropout prevention. Second, DOE should make available, upon request technically competent staff to help school divisions clarify their evaluations and meet the terms of the agencies' guidelines. An alternative strategy would be to facilitate the linking of divisions into an evaluation consortium, joined (or not) to a local college or university.

Third, the DOE should specify what data it needs for policy decisions to be responsive to members of the legislature and other individuals and consult with school divisions to ensure that these are collected and reported in an accurate and timely fashion. Fourth, the DOE should consult with divisions to ensure that data about effective and ineffective practices are collected and reported regularly. The DOE should consider monitoring how and when school divisions report to the department and other constituencies, thus extending accountability to the state level.

In light of DOE workload and other limitations, it may not be possible to meet effectively school divisions' needs for assistance. Some effort should be made, however, to initiate on an experimental basis a statewide consultative approach by linking schools to universities and by linking them and the DOE to other public agencies. For example, in Pulaski County a cooperative effort exists with Radford University where a free evening counseling program is being implemented. School social workers and counselors refer families to the School Family Counseling Center

located on the grounds of Pulaski County High School. Family and individual counseling is provided by graduate students supervised by professors from Radford University.

The DOE should be held accountable for state-level rates of early school-leaving, and for consulting with school divisions as they assess their own efforts to reduce the dropout rate. One DOE contribution could be to help school divisions find others to which they can compare themselves. This cross-divisional comparison can supplement the more typical historical comparison done in each division.

SUMMARY

This chapter has addressed the question of "What does effective practice mean?" and argues that effective practice must be considered as a combination of efforts. That is, no one program or practice will, by itself, result in a decrease in the dropout rate and a lowering of student risk. There can be no "dose-effect" findings that will solve the dropout problem now and forever more. Given the range of types of students at-risk to early school leaving, programs must be responsive to the unique, individual needs of both students and their families in multiple ways.

Based upon two years of evaluation data, five domains have been identified as minimal areas for Project YES to address in order to be effective in reducing student risk to early school leaving. These include parent involvement, community involvement, early detection and monitoring of social-psychological indicators, responding with different alternatives to youth with different kinds and degrees of risk, and monitoring and evaluating the program. Also, twelve characteristics of effective programs have been identified during the first two years of the study.

Minimum criteria for holding both the DOE and local school divisions accountable for the use of Project YES funds have also been provided. These efforts must be based on an active and systematic attempt to collect and use information in program development, management, and assessment.

A variety of recommendations are also provided for how the DOE can contribute to the improvement of Project YES, including training for Project YES staff members and the identification of what data is needed for policy-decisions that is responsive to the legislature.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LIST OF SCHOOL DIVISIONS RECEIVING PROJECT YES FUNDS

STATUTORY SOURCES OF PROJECT YES

FUNDING FORMULA FOR PROJECT YES

DROPOUT PREVENTION PROJECT YES		1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
001	ACCOMACK	$133,730	$134,390	$139,288	$133,635
002	ALBEMARLE	0	95,993	105,064	0
003	ALLEGHANY	0	0	36,128	41,595
004	AMELIA	0	19,011	34,776	39,648
005	AMHERST	65,346	73,891	78,016	80,889
006	APPOMATTOX	0	0	0	0
007	ARLINGTON	97,574	93,608	136,166	160,593
008	AUGUSTA	0	0	0	118,413
009	BATH	0	0	0	0
010	BEDFORD	0	0	0	0
011	BLAND	0	0	0	0
012	BOTETOURT	0	0	0	63,189
013	BRUNSWICK	0	0	0	71,154
014	BUCHANAN	0	198,293	181,424	121,953
015	BUCKINGHAM	45,049	59,815	57,224	52,569
016	CAMPBELL	132,844	118,459	110,952	142,839
017	CAROLINE	52,856	73,239	53,912	48,144
018	CARROLL	0	0	90,896	70,623
019	CHARLES CITY	0	26,143	26,864	32,568
020	CHARLOTTE	25,704	44,436	29,624	32,568
021	CHESTERFIELD	0	343,786	352,176	321,963
022	CLARKE	15,914	8,273	13,800	0
023	CRAIG	0	0	0	9,558
024	CULPEPER	70,372	75,414	104,720	90,801
025	CUMBERLAND	38,720	32,338	20,792	29,913
026	DICKENSON	82,002	83,242	86,664	68,145
027	DINWIDDIE	0	0	0	55,224
028	ESSEX	24,265	23,454	25,024	28,143

DROPOUT PREVENTION PROJECT YES		1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
029	FAIRFAX	0	0	0	0
030	FAUQUIER	0	80,872	63,296	92,217
031	FLOYD	0	0	0	32,745
032	FLUVANNA	51,097	48,090	39,560	26,904
033	FRANKLIN	90,857	87,435	80,960	0
034	FREDERICK	74,993	92,405	102,488	95,049
035	GILES	0	0	0	0
036	GLOUCESTER	0	98,646	89,792	75,048
037	GOOCHLAND	0	24,961	25,392	9,027
038	GRAYSON	0	0	0	0
039	GREENE	16,544	27,997	23,000	28,674
040	GREENSVILLE	88,100	81,840	94,024	70,977
041	HALIFAX	153,565	111,688	96,261	100,182
042	HANOVER	0	0	0	0
043	HENRICO	0	0	282,624	302,847
044	HENRY	185,629	204,372	195,592	190,629
045	HIGHLAND	0	0	8,280	0
046	ISLE OF WIGHT	97,503	89,674	75,072	64,605
047	JAMES CITY	102,958	0	0	0
048	KING GEORGE	0	0	0	0
049	KING QUEEN	0	0	18,400	23,010
050	KING WILLIAM	0	0	0	0
051	LANCASTER	0	21,859	16,744	20,001
052	LEE	150,161	114,882	123,096	105,492
053	LOUDOUN	0	0	0	0
054	LOUISA	75,704	67,285	58,696	49,914
055	LUNENBURG	0	0	38,088	63,897
056	MADISON	38,651	46,948	44,528	47,967
057	MATHEWS	0	0	0	0

DROPOUT PREVENTION PROJECT YES		1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
058	MECKLENBURG	35,072	127,391	136,344	146,910
059	MIDDLESEX	0	0	11,408	0
060	MONTGOMERY	113,279	102,606	112,608	87,792
062	NELSON	0	35,151	39,376	30,621
063	NEW KENT	0	0	0	0
065	NORTHAMPTON	0	54,228	51,888	73,809
066	NORTHUMBERLAND	30,067	18,050	22,816	20,709
067	NOTTOWAY	0	0	39,192	37,878
068	ORANGE	51,098	60,052	59,432	69,030
069	PAGE	78,201	67,491	69,000	51,684
070	PATRICK	0	0	53,544	40,887
071	PITTSYLVANIA	204,158	221,153	217,488	216,648
072	POWHATAN	31,337	40,688	26,312	36,108
073	PRINCE EDWARD	54,348	50,755	48,024	53,100
074	PRINCE GEORGE	0	0	49,680	41,949
075	PRINCE WILLIAM	0	0	0	370,936
077	PULASKI	110,439	95,827	92,736	68,853
078	RAPPAHANNOCK	11,605	14,735	8,832	7,434
079	RICHMOND	0	0	0	4,956
080	ROANOKE	0	0	105,432	0
081	ROCKBRIDGE	39,719	47,483	48,208	43,365
082	ROCKINGHAM	126,700	124,458	166,520	152,220
083	RUSSELL	98,573	106,862	107,272	103,368
084	SCOTT	37,500	84,357	80,960	42,126
085	SHENANDOAH	0	0	62,008	53,100
086	SMYTH	0	0	76,544	0
087	SOUTHAMPTON	33,660	37,271	39,192	45,135
088	SPOTSYLVANIA	150,967	140,885	163,576	171,336
089	STAFFORD	0	91,788	114,448	131,157

DROPOUT PREVENTION PROJECT YES		1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
090	SURRY	0	0	0	0
091	SUSSEX	0	65,147	44,712	0
092	TAZEWELL	0	0	0	108,855
093	WARREN	67,713	93,084	59,432	77,349
094	WASHINGTON	0	155,300	144,440	129,387
095	WESTMORELAND	31,000	31,479	29,624	27,435
096	WISE	142,620	159,594	149,408	140,007
097	WYTHE	0	0	63,480	84,960
098	YORK	0	0	0	0
101	ALEXANDRIA	155,853	214,306	139,050	169,349
102	BRISTOL	48,354	24,156	42,688	32,745
103	BUENA VISTA	22,539	22,823	17,848	28,851
104	CHARLOTTESVILLE	73,551	68,172	76,176	69,384
105	CLIFTON FORGE	0	0	10,792	0
106	COLONIAL HEIGHTS	0	0	0	0
107	COVINGTON	0	0	0	17,700
108	DANVILLE	118,170	171,126	184,184	157,353
109	FALLS CHURCH	0	0	0	0
110	FREDERICKSBURG	31,728	32,060	29,072	24,249
111	GALAX	0	0	8,280	9,735
112	HAMPTON	316,570	300,851	303,784	387,984
113	HARRISONBURG	0	31,707	25,208	29,736
114	HOPEWELL	69,415	44,160	56,856	47,613
115	LYNCHBURG	131,000	137,582	129,536	126,024
116	MARTINSVILLE	50,288	56,054	57,960	33,807
117	NEWPORT NEWS	393,865	401,321	407,928	389,931
118	NORFOLK	547,788	579,534	510,232	573,126
119	NORTON	0	11,542	11,592	11,151
120	PETERSBURG	88,985	82,491	106,168	93,279

DROPOUT PREVENTION PROJECT YES		1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
121	PORTSMOUTH	379,997	401,448	387,320	295,236
122	RADFORD	0	0	11,408	0
123	RICHMOND CITY	450,350	344,801	397,808	394,179
124	ROANOKE CITY	212,882	267,374	266,248	256,296
126	STAUNTON	30,463	37,477	37,720	26,373
127	SUFFOLK	165,656	158,380	152,536	115,050
128	VIRGINIA BEACH	105,096	689,779	561,016	562,152
130	WAYNESBORO	23,000	32,689	22,080	0
131	WILLIAMSBURG	0	138,508	67,896	76,641
132	WINCHESTER	30,025	42,909	30,176	21,063
133	SOUTH BOSTON	0	3,724	21,131	8,319
134	FAIRFAX CITY	0	0	0	0
135	FRANKLIN CITY	0	0	0	0
136	CHESAPEAKE CITY	0	0	520,720	529,053
137	LEXINGTON	3,943	2,797	0	4,425
138	EMPORIA	0	0	0	0
139	SALEM	35,966	37,646	30,912	25,488
140	BEDFORD CITY	0	0	0	0
142	POQUOSON	0	0	0	0
143	MANASSAS CITY	33,000	40,714	52,736	46,566
144	MANASSAS PARK	0	0	0	13,333
202	COLONIAL BEACH	11,775	5,321	10,488	12,390
207	WEST POINT	0	0	7,912	0
	TOTAL	6,888,453	9,110,026	10,348,800	10,470,997

STATUTORY PROVISIONS OF PROJECT YES

1. HOUSE BILL 1006 (March 1990)

Section 22.1-209.1:1. Noncompetitive grants program for school dropout prevention. ---With such funds as are appropriated for this purpose, the Board of Education shall establish a program for the prevention of school dropout. All school divisions shall be eligible to receive such grants under the following conditions:

1. The local school dropout prevention program includes components which emphasize prevention, intervention, retrieval, and parental and community involvement.

2. The program includes a component specifically designed to eliminate the poor academic achievement among disadvantaged students in the school divisions; and

3. The program includes a component for oversight and evaluation of program effectiveness.

The Board of Education shall establish a full-time dropout prevention unit and shall employ such professional and support staff as may be necessary to implement the grants program, provide coordination for the statewide dropout prevention program, technical assistance to school divisions and to monitor such local dropout prevention programs to ensure compliance and uniformity in the interpretation and application of such rules and regulations as may be adopted by the Board.

2. 1992 APPROPRIATIONS ACT (April 1992)

J. Dropout Prevention Payments

1. Out of the amounts for Financial Assistance for Dropout Prevention shall be paid $10,470,997 in each year to support a statewide dropout prevention program. Such program shall contain the following elements which are consistent with the following:

a.) An application process for localities that wish to participate in the program;

b.) Priority consideration to those localities with the most acute need for such programs (as reflected by each locality's dropout rate and the improvement in such rate);

c.) Target grants based on $177 for each pupil in grades 6 through 10 who is judged on consistent and objective criteria to be at risk of dropping out of school, based on the number of eighth grade students in the bottom national quartile. (For localities in Planning District 8, the per pupil grant shall be $199 per pupil).

d.) Provisions for a local resource commitment of 40 percent, to match state grant funds of 60 percent; and,

e.) Local program plans which include systematic identification of potential dropouts, assessment of individual student needs, and provision or coordinated alternative programs to meet such needs.

FUNDING FORMULA FOR PROJECT YES

1. School divisions were ranked for eligibility to receive Project YES monies through a formula which weighted the actual dropout rate at 75 percent and the improvement rate at 25 percent.

2. Local entitlements were determined by applying the percentage of at-risk children (percent of eighth-grade students scoring in the bottom quartile of state tests) to the number of children enrolled in grades 6-10.

3. This formula yielded an estimate of the total number of at-risk students in those grades.

4. The estimated number of at-risk students was then multiplied by $177 ($199 in Planning District 8) to determine the grant amount.

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF PROJECT YES: DID IT WORK?
TENTATIVE ANSWERS FROM A SIX-MONTH EVALUATION

PROJECT YES

Is It Working?

BY DR. MICHAEL BAIZERMAN AND DR. DONALD COMPTON

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In response to an unacceptably high dropout rate, and in an attempt to combat the downward spiral that dropping out inevitably begins in a young person's life, Project Youth Experiencing Success (YES) began during the 1989-90 school year. During the current academic year, 102 of the state's school divisions (77 percent) received Project YES funding to support dropout prevention efforts, with emphasis on improving student self-esteem and increasing parental and community involvement. The remaining school divisions did not receive state funding simply because

the appropriation was insufficient to meet the needs of every division statewide.

Project YES represents a huge commitment of state resources, financial and otherwise. Are all those resources having an impact? Is Project YES making a difference in the lives of Virginia students?

To begin to answer those questions, the Virginia Department of Education began a three-year statewide evaluation of Project YES last July. During the first year, the evaluation has focused on the program's overall achievements and on recommendations for policy and program improvements.

The Virginia Department of Education began a three-year statewide evaluation of Project YES last July.

The recently-distributed evaluation report covers eight policy areas chosen because national research shows them to be significant factors in students' decisions to drop out. Recommendations in the report are based on a preventive model that is designed to reduce school failure and increase the likelihood of high school graduation.

The report's findings are based on a statewide survey of Project YES coordinators and a case study of seven programs across the state (one elementary school, one middle school, one junior high school and four alternative high schools). For the case study, interviews were conducted with the school principal, the Project YES coordinator, the school counselor and one teacher in each program. Group interviews were also conducted with students.

FINDINGS

Through the course of those interviews, it became clear that Project YES has had positive effects on the school divisions' capacity to reduce dropout rates. Staff members attribute important gains in attendance, grades, behavior and in keeping children and adolescents enrolled in school to Project YES. Clearly, the program has resulted in increased resources devoted to at-risk students, an increase in the number of staff trained to work with such students, and a commitment to reduce the dropout rate.

Additionally, a number of themes emerged that have led to recommendations that, if implemented, could further enhance efforts to reduce school failure. We'll focus on these themes and recommendations for Project YES programs.

School Attendance: The major theme of attendance policies within the sample appears to be control and compliance, rather than student development through mastery of responsibility. Related is the theme that attendance is an ongoing conflict between the school and some students and is best approached as an opportunity to integrate in-school and community-based services, along with student and family participation. Also involved is the perception of some students that absence from school is a rational choice because the educational program provided does not meet their interests or needs. Hence, YES programs were seen as alternative to the regular school setting.

School staff reported that a common practice for some students, especially for those involved with the juvenile court system, is to attend school every fifteenth day to prevent being dropped from the rolls. In this way, they satisfy the terms of their probation.

"If the child is on probation and has a probation officer and that child is not enrolled in school he or she is subject to being picked up the the correctional system and re-incarcerated," explained one Project YES coordinator. "Generally, a condition of probation is that the student be enrolled in school. What youngsters do to evade this is to come to school on the fifteenth day and be out fourteen consecutive days. That Friday of the third week he shows up. What we have found when we looked at our list of dropouts was that students who had dropped out of school had been in school more days than some youngsters who were still on the roll."

Some of the recommendations made in the area of school attendance include implementing school-based programs for *daily* response to student absence, organizing in-school programs on the basic responsibilities of being a student and the basic skills of being a responsible child and adolescent, and creating opportunities for parenting and child-development education.

Driver's License Law: House Bill 1605 (1989) requires that in order to receive a driver's license, students under 18 must have a high school diploma or similar certificate, or provide documentation showing compliance with the state's attendance law, or show that they are receiving counseling regarding the importance of school attendance and completion.

Staff members attribute important gains in attendance, grades, behavior and in keeping children and adolescents enrolled in school to Project YES.

Two major themes developed out of the evaluation data: first, that the law is not a central theme in dropout policies or programs and, second, the law contributes to a sense that there is little connection between interests in public safety, public education and the law. As it is currently implemented, the law is not having its intended effect and duplicates the law requiring school attendance until age 18.

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EMILY MARTINDALE

Students also understand that to be eligible to receive their licenses, all that is required is a perfunctory visit with the school counselor. So, many go through the motions.

"The kids read and see very well that if they do not go to school they cannot obtain a driver's license," says one principal. "However, they can walk in, sit down with a counselor, and be 'counseled.' They say 'thank you—all I wanted was my driver's license anyway—not this counseling session. I have that signature.' What does that accomplish?"

Repeal of the law is recommended.

Standards for Literacy: In 1988, the General Assembly enacted Standards of Quality that included the Literacy Testing Program (LTP), requiring all students to pass literacy tests in order to be eligible to be promoted to ninth grade. Interview data indicate that LTP is seen primarily as an accountability measure. The most frequently expressed concern about the program was its effect on students already at high risk of dropping out.

*Some recommendations include a **daily** response to student absence, in-school programs on the basic skills of being a responsible child and adolescent, and opportunities for parenting and child-development education.*

"I understand that there is a real reason to have kids take it, but when you get to the at-risk kid, the kid who is not succeeding in school and you tell him he's not

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going to be a ninth-grader until he passes it, that is not going to help the dropout rate at all," says another principal. "Some who don't pass it and are already behind in credits or are overage are going to drop out. There are always going to be some kids who can never pass a test like that. It is just one more way for them to fail."

The DOE will continue to evaluate the effects of the LTP on at-risk students as part of the Project YES evaluation, and a second, separate evaluation of the LTP is underway to assess its effects for all students.

School Suspension: School discipline policies show the tension created by a school's use of control and punishment, compared to a valid pedagogic action used after other, less disruptive approaches have been tried. Also clear as a theme was the perception of suspension as simply an assertion of adult authority as a factor in causing students to drop out of school. Missing is an integrated school and community response to its students. It is recommended that school divisions specify the pedagogic rationale for suspensions and link them to student development and to community services. For example, it should be insufficient for a policy to say that students will be suspended for committing certain acts. Rather, it should show that suspension for students who commit such acts has an educational rationale, not just a punitive one.

A second finding here was that some divisions do not monitor their suspension rates to assess the effectiveness of suspension and its effects on school performance. One Project YES program coordinator expressed surprise upon reviewing the suspension rates in her division: "Our division had over 500 out-of-school suspensions last year. That's phenomenal!" she says. "That is a school building full of children. Obviously, that is not the deterrent to behavior problems that it was intended to be."

Some school divisions do not monitor their suspension rates to assess the effectiveness of suspension and its effects on school performance.

NEA PHOTO

B.4

Positive Self-Regard: Many programs are designed to improve students' self-esteem, but few are substantive. The terms self-esteem and self-concept are used loosely in these programs; a more useful term may be positive self-regard, which denotes an increased personal competence, resilience and choice.

It is recommended that school divisions adopt and implement a policy that integrates self-esteem into an overall concept of child and adolescent development. This approach shifts the emphasis from "add-on" programs designed to improve self-esteem to ones which integrate opportunities for meaningful youth participation in decisions that affect them. Such participation gives experience in social decision-making necessary for making personal choices. "Meaningful participation" means that the youth evaluates his or her experience as "real" and of value. One way to accomplish this is through peer or cross-age tutoring. Participation in these programs is not simply a ritual in which one student comes to talk with another for 10 minutes—it's an opportunity for authentic involvement. In well-designed programs, some training for the student is involved, sufficient time is provided for the tutoring session, appropriate supervision is available, and students have a chance to reflect on the experience.

Dropout Reentry: Dropout reentry was found to mean multiple easy pathways to a more family-like than school-like atmosphere, and a faculty and staff that can modify traditional rules. This creates an atmosphere that is more inviting than the regular school program.

Given the more intense student-staff contact in Project YES programs, these relationships are crucial in inviting and sustaining involvement—a new sense of belonging. This is especially true for those youth who left school because of a family crisis and are "transitory at-risk" students. The willingness of the school staff to see those who leave school early as responsible youth and adults who made a choice, however foolish it may

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appear to the staff, seems basic to an effective dropout reentry program.

It is recommended that division and individual school rules, practices and procedures be designed to facilitate reentry. For example, schools could be open in the evenings and on Saturdays, and paperwork could be minimized.

Parental Involvement: This was seen as an ambiguous responsibility that involved very little conversation with parents about mutual expectations for their children. Few effective school-based models involving parents were discovered, and there appears to be little effective work with the parents in the community.

It is recommended that each school division create and implement a pedagogically sound policy of parental involvement directed at child, adolescent and family development. This means more than one parental meeting with a teacher per semester. Something like a policy encouraging parents to do homework with their children in school buildings or at a community center would be far more effective.

Community Involvement: Community involvement is poorly understood by school professionals and the term is often interpreted as merely being involved in a field trip or volunteering for some other school activity. Few effective models were seen. There seems to be little authentic, effective cooperation between the school and its host community. However, there are active efforts to use "community" as a resource, a place to visit and learn one's way around, and a place to find opportunities for services. Many programs open their doors to community volunteers who tutor and otherwise help at-risk students in the school building.

Something like a policy encouraging parents to do homework with their children in school buildings or at a community center would be far more effective than one parental meeting with a teacher per semester.

There is relatively little collaboration with nonformal youth-serving agencies such as Boy/Girl Scouts, 4-H, FFA or the like, while there is contact with formal services for youths, such as juvenile probation. Much effort is given to coordinating services in the school, but far less effort is given to coordinating community services for children and youth.

Little attention is given to how the school can contribute to articulating and meeting the community's agenda for its children, adolescents and youth. Hence, it is recommended that each school division formulate a broad policy to involve the school in the community and the community in the school in ways that will enhance individual, family and community development.

CONCLUSION

In many of the schools in the sample, policy is focused on a concerted effort to identify, understand and respond to at-risk students and those who have already dropped out. This in itself may be grounds for continuing Project YES programs, since, in one sense, this is one example of the community's moral compact with its children. By focusing on the community reality of at-risk students, that reality becomes harder to ignore. That is basic to the development and refinement of longer term policies, programs and services.

Focusing on the community reality of at-risk students makes that reality harder to ignore. This in itself may be grounds for continuing Project YES programs.

In the 1,000 pages of transcribed interviews related to Project YES, one finds again and again comments about happiness, joy, playfulness, love, caring, hope, freedom, possibility, presence and similar words referring to experiences, feelings, beliefs and ideas. These should not be discounted.

The purpose of the evaluation is to illuminate Project YES, and in this way make it available to policymakers and others. Illumination discloses and facilitates, but does not decide or defend. Instead, it can make decisions more focused and valid, as it fosters reflection, opinion and choice. The findings and recommendations presented are not intended to cause the program staff and other persons to assess whether the program should or should not continue. Rather, the question that should be debated is, What are the possibilities for the program?

An effective program is one in which children and adults are happy, feel safe and secure, and are protected. Effective programs are environment and moments of pedagogic action—all are oriented and active (more or less) in the service of the possibilities of themselves as individuals and as a community.

Effective programs disclose the nature of true education! □

The authors would like to acknowledge the Project YES evaluation team for its participation in designing the evaluation and collecting the data for this article.

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APPENDIX C

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE FINAL PROJECT YES EVALUATION REPORT

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE FINAL PROJECT YES EVALUATION REPORT

Focus in the final report will build on the previous two reports from the first two years of the study both substantially and methodologically. Both a mailed statewide survey and site visits will be done to learn more in-depth about the following, at least.

School practices for students at-risk which have been developed, kept, and discarded

Implementation and consequences of the eight policy domains discussed in the first interim evaluation report

The DOE's consultative model to school divisions

Roles in at-risk programs of social workers and counselors

School action in the community to reduce student risk

Community agencies experiences and views on working with schools in relation to at-risk students

An evaluation of the evaluation.

These foci follow from at least two questions: What might occur in school programs for at-risk students if the budget for them was cut 5-25%? What might be the local interagency environment of the school's program for at-risk students if Virginia moves toward an integrated community-based model?

Major attention will be given to YES coordinators and to the local head of the Office on Youth, with less time given to teachers. Youth may be asked again to prepare a presentation on YES for videotaping.

APPENDIX D

DIAGRAM AND DESCRIPTION OF SELECTED DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO REDUCE RISK OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

DESCRIPTION OF SELECTED DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO REDUCE RISK OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

Within the Department of Education, YES is one of many projects intended to prevent students from leaving school early. The projects include:

1. School dropout administration - The school dropout administration team is responsible for the overall management of Project YES. Specific objectives include to review grant applications from school divisions, to determine if local (LEA) Project YES components are consistent with the original grant application objectives, to provide technical assistance to LEA grant recipients, and to link Project YES with existing projects related to services to at-risk students.

2. Youth Risk Prevention Project - The Drug Free Schools and Communities Act (DFSCA) was originally enacted in 1986 to provide schools with funds to supplement their programs for alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse prevention education and prevention which would be coordinated with related community efforts and resources.

   Virginia was awarded funds for grants to LEAs to create and operate local programs of drug abuse prevention, early intervention, rehabilitation, referral, and education in elementary and secondary schools. The role of the DOE team in this program is to administer the DFSCA program, to provide technical assistance, training and resources to schools and communities, to monitor school division compliance with the provisions of DFSCA and to evaluate the effectiveness of local, regional and statewide alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse prevention programs and activities.

3. Alternative Education Project - The alternative education project team is charged with reviewing the current Regulations Governing Alternative Education, developing guidelines and recommendations for implementing effective alternative education programs, providing technical assistance which will assist local school divisions in establishing alternative education programs and providing a detailed report on the status of alternative education in Virginia.

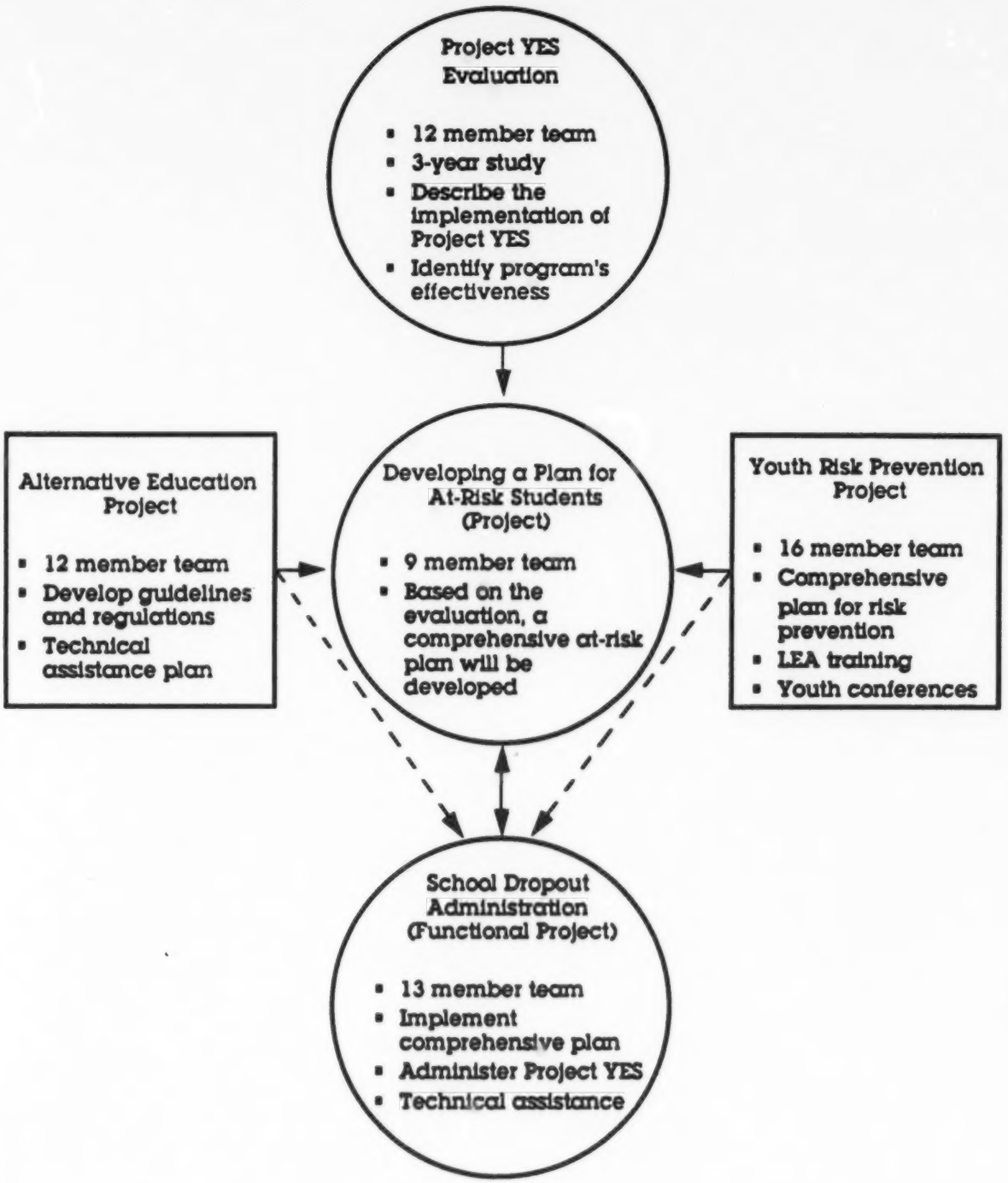
4. Project YES Evaluation Team - The Project YES evaluation team is responsible for implementing the overall program evaluation of Project YES. Findings and recommendations for program improvement are provided through annual reports through December 1993.

5. Comprehensive Program for Persons At Risk (PPAR) - House Bill 1006 requires the DOE to establish a program for the delivery of coordinated and integrated services for children at-risk and to develop a plan to provide age appropriate support for any student identified as at-risk that emphasizes the necessity of individualizing the programs to match the characteristics and needs of the child. In a recent draft report, the team recommended developing a cost-effective child advocacy model to assist at-risk students and developing an information awareness plan about at-risk students through the statewide public and commercial broadcast system.

Other significant activities in the domain of services for at-risk students include the development of criteria for the identification of educationally at-risk children (See Appendix E), the development of the Virginia Guaranteed Assistance Program and participating in the implementation of the Comprehensive Services Act for At-Risk Youth and their families.

This selected summary of DOE activities provides a general overview of some of the central efforts to lower risk and the dropout rate. Many other programs, such as the federally funded Chapter I program, have similar purposes. However, a description of all activities related to at-risk students is beyond the scope of this report.

COORDINATED SERVICES FOR THE DROPOUT PREVENTION UNIT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



APPENDIX E

DRAFT OF CRITERIA FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF EDUCATIONALLY AT-RISK CHILDREN AND YOUTH

DRAFT

Virginia Department of Education

CRITERIA FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF EDUCATIONALLY AT-RISK CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Standards of Quality: ". . . State funding for remedial programs provided pursuant to this subsection and the appropriation act may be used to support programs for educationally at-risk students as identified by the local school boards. The Board of Education shall establish criteria for identification of educationally at-risk students . . ."

Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-253.13.1 F

PURPOSE AND DEFINITION

The purpose of this paper is to establish guidelines for the identification of children and youth in Virginia who are at-risk of failure in school. At-risk students are those who have fallen behind in skills and studies, have a high probability of not successfully completing formal education, or have dropped out of school.

INTRODUCTION

Children in Virginia who exhibit at-risk characteristics are a rapidly growing segment of the student population. Currently these students may be unserved, underserved, or inappropriately served by our system of schooling. Success in school depends on school programs and curricula that meet the individual student's needs. A curriculum and instructional approach that is successful for the mainstream student often fails for the student who may be unable or unwilling to accept subject matter that is presented with an over reliance on isolated information and skills, such as rote memorization or recitation. To improve student outcomes, teaching styles and instructional materials must successfully respond to the range of social, cultural and personal differences among students.

Factors beyond the school also determine the degree to which students succeed in school. One such factor is the level of support and encouragement that students receive from their families, peers and community. Educational risk is, therefore, a term suggesting both failure of the support systems for the child and potential failure on the part of the individual student. Also, risk is relative in terms of time; students may be educationally at-risk briefly or for a prolonged period, depending on the nature and source of the condition causing their poor educational performance. For example, a student may be considered at low risk if he or she is

absent for a week due to illness and might require a tutor; a high school student who is truant for an extended period may be considered at high risk and require considerably greater attention. The use of ineffective educational methods and strategies may also prolong a student's risk. School programs must focus on supporting the student's personal commitment to educational success and on responding to indicators of educational risk as early as possible.

While it is important to develop criteria for identifying students in need of services, the use of fixed criteria must be approached cautiously to avoid unintended effects. For example, students identified as at-risk for having failed a grade could be permanently labelled as at-risk even though their school performance is satisfactory throughout the remainder of their school career. Frequent review of student progress is necessary to guard against permanently identifying a student as at-risk. In addition, while criteria for identifying students at-risk of poor educational performance are proposed for the purpose of meeting their needs and reducing their risk of failure, nothing in these guidelines should be construed to encourage segregating children with identified risk characteristics from their peers.

CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING EDUCATIONALLY AT-RISK STUDENTS

In establishing these criteria, we must first affirm that all students can learn. However, we must also recognize that life experiences, family circumstances and instructional practice can put a child at an educational disadvantage. It is within this context that we must find ways to break the cycle and reclaim this segment of our future generations.

There are three different approaches schools can take when responding to student risk. Schools can implement strategies to:

- Prevent student failure;
- Intervene when students first exhibit signs of having difficulty in learning; and
- Accelerate/retrieve students who are failing or who have failed to achieve academically.

We propose, therefore, categories of student risk criteria that correspond to each of the approaches listed above. Students who are identified by one or more of these risk criterion may be targeted for assistance through the corresponding strategy. Most of these criteria are cited in educational research and all are closely linked to poor student achievement. The proposed criteria are:

Prevention - criteria that predate or are independent of school entry that can be measured and used to target programmatic efforts toward the early grades:

- ❑ Living in poverty - as eligible for free lunch, ADC, food stamps;
- ❑ Limited English proficiency; and/or
- ❑ Health problems (physical, mental, emotional).

Intervention - criteria that may become evident during the school year that can be used to target programmatic efforts prior to actual failure:

- ❑ Record of delinquency;
- ❑ Pregnancy/parenthood;
- ❑ Drugs/alcohol user;
- ❑ Family problems;
- ❑ Behavior problems (suspensions/expulsions); and/or
- ❑ Frequently absent/truant - more than 10 days per year.

Acceleration and Retrieval - criteria that identify students who are failing or who have failed to achieve academically:

- ❑ Poor academic performance;
- ❑ A documented dropout; and/or
- ❑ Retained in grade (overage in grade).

This plan has previously acknowledged that the community in which students live may have a negative impact on their potential risk. To the extent that community factors affect many children, not just one, these factors may indicate the need for entire schools to be considered in need of additional assistance, based on the prevalence of students who meet the above risk criteria. In addition, schools that may require additional resources to meet the various learning needs of its student body, again based on a high percentage of students meeting the above criteria, should be considered candidates for additional assistance. Several school divisions across the state currently identify schools in this way for the purpose of targeting resources.

As such, divisions may find it appropriate to identify schools for targeting at-risk funds where the school can demonstrate that a majority of its students meet one or more of the student risk criteria listed above.

STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATING AT-RISK CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Although communities will need to develop their own strategies for addressing their individual conditions, the large body of knowledge that exists on effective educational practices can serve as a valuable resource. Table 1 provides examples of strategies that have been shown to be effective in addressing the needs of at-risk youth in the categories of prevention, intervention and acceleration/retrieval. Any combination of these would provide acceptable plans for local at-risk programs.

ACCOUNTABILITY

To comply with the provisions of the Standards of Quality and these criteria established by the Board of Education, each school division in Virginia must establish policies and regulations that identify their student at-risk indicators and set out a program to address the effects of these conditions through prevention, intervention, and/or acceleration/retrieval. School divisions are encouraged to pursue both the development of their individualized criteria and their specific educational proposals on a community-wide basis. A committee of citizens representing all segments of the community should be enlisted to develop the division's at-risk plan. Because family and community-based problems frequently contribute to the educational risk of children, all parts of the community should be part of the solution. Although schools must act to reduce the risk of children, they cannot assume this responsibility alone.

Because the Commonwealth of Virginia has expressly provided additional state funds to ensure the provision of programs for at-risk youth in every school division in the Commonwealth, the Department of Education is interested in cooperatively developing an accountability system that provides appropriate flexibility as well as reasonable accountability. To this end, each school division is asked to provide answers to the following questions to the Department by October 15, 1992:

1. Based on the list (page 3) of proposed Board of Education criteria, which criteria will you use to identify students in your division who are educationally at-risk? Please list. Will there be different criteria at different schools? If so, please provide criteria selected for each school.

2. What programs, activities, or services to reduce their risk do you currently provide? Please list and describe briefly.

3. What new or enhanced programs, activities, or services to reduce their risk will you implement in 1992-93, in 1993-94? Please list and describe.

4. How will you evaluate and want us to evaluate the extent to which your efforts are succeeding? On what schedule? Please give measures and timelines.

Does baseline data exist for these purposes? (Baseline data is that which establishes what conditions were prior to beginning the new effort; it is against this that future conditions are compared in order to determine the effect of the effort.) If so, where? Please provide, if we do not collect this data at the state level. If not, what plans do you have for creating this baseline; and when will you be providing it to us? Please list data categories and timelines.

TABLE 1: EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES TO REDUCE STUDENT RISK

	INDICATORS OF STUDENT RISK	STRATEGIES Targeted Toward Students	STRATEGIES Targeted Toward Schools
PREVENTION	<u>Living in Poverty</u> • Free lunch eligibility • AFDC eligibility • Food Stamp eligibility Limited English proficiency Health problems (physical, mental and emotional)	❑ Preschool programs for four-year-olds ❑ Developmentally appropriate practices in grades K-3 ❑ Adult education for mothers ❑ Reading Recovery programs ❑ Parental involvement	❑ Reduced class size ❑ Staff development ❑ Assess & improve school climate ❑ Community involvement ❑ Teaching methods targeted toward different learning styles
INTERVENTION	Record of delinquency Pregnancy/parenthood Drugs/alcohol user Family problems Behavior problems (suspensions or expulsions) Frequently absent or truant (more than 10 days per year)	❑ Mentor programs ❑ Tutors/instructional aides ❑ Parental involvement ❑ Peer tutoring ❑ Varied instructional time	❑ Career exploration & development programs ❑ Alternative schools* ❑ Assess & improve school climate ❑ Classroom management training for teachers ❑ Community involvement ❑ Support services (health services, drug abuse services, counselling)
ACCELERATION & RETRIEVAL	<u>Poor Academic Performance:</u> • Failure to obtain Literacy Passport • Bottom quartile on standardized tests Documented dropout Retained in grade (overage in grade)	❑ Acceleration programs ❑ Summer programs ❑ Parental involvement ❑ Varied instructional time	❑ Accelerated schools ❑ Alternative schools ❑ Community involvement ❑ Cooperative learning

* Alternative schools offer choices in terms of time, location, staffing and programs to provide learning experiences that meet the unique needs, interests and abilities of at-risk students.

APPENDIX F

VIRGINIA SCHOOL DROPOUTS 1988-89 - 1991-92

PERCENT OF TOTAL DROPOUTS BY GENDER 1988-89 - 1991-92

PERCENT OF TOTAL DROPOUTS BY GRADE 1988-89 - 1991-92

PERCENT OF TOTAL DROPOUTS BY RACE/ETHNIC CATEGORY 1988-89 - 1991-1992

EVENT DROPOUT RATES BY GRADE AND RACE/ETHNICITY 1991-92

EVENT DROPOUT RATES BY GRADE, RACE/ETHNICITY, AND GENDER 1991-92

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF DROPOUT RATES FOR MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS 1990-91

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF DROPOUT RATES FOR ALL STUDENTS 1990-91

DROPOUT RATES 1988-89 - 1991-92 BY SCHOOL DIVISION AND PARTICIPATION IN PROJECT YES 1991-92

SYNTHETIC COHORT DROPOUT RATE BY SCHOOL DIVISION

TECHNICAL NOTES

Table 1

Virginia School Dropouts
Grades 7–12

	1988–89	1989–90	1990–91	1991–92
Regular Term Dropouts	17,045	14,329	11,718	11,590
Summer Dropouts	3,727	2,716	2,655	2,646
TOTAL	20,772	17,045	14,373	14,236
Event Dropout Rate*	4.8%	4.0%	3.4%	3.3%

* $\frac{\text{Dropouts}}{\text{End of Year Membership + Dropouts}} \times 100 = \text{Event dropout rate}$

This definition represents the share of students who leave school without completing high school during a single year.

F.1

Table 2

Percent of Total Dropouts by Gender

	1988–89		1989–90		1990–91		1991–92	
Gender	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	12,228	58.9	9,996	58.6	8,376	58.3	8,390	58.9
Female	8,544	41.1	7,049	41.4	5,997	41.7	5,846	41.1
TOTAL	20,772	100.0	17,045	100.0	14,373	100.0	14,236	100.0

Table 3

Percent of Total Dropouts by Grade

Grade Category	1988–89		1989–90		1990–91		1991–92	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Grade 7	881	4.2	576	3.4	488	3.4	412	2.9
Grade 8	1,448	7.0	1,123	6.6	966	6.7	840	5.9
Grade 9	5,464	26.3	4,570	26.8	3,912	27.2	4,019	28.2
Grade 10	4,921	23.7	4,006	23.5	3,346	23.3	3,411	24.0
Grade 11	4,206	20.2	3,407	20.0	2,715	18.9	2,743	19.3
Grade 12	3,123	15.0	2,911	17.1	2,567	17.9	2,342	16.5
Secondary Ungraded	729	3.5	452	2.7	379	2.6	469	3.3
TOTAL	20,772	100.0	17,045	100.0	14,373	100.0	14,236	100.0

Table 4

Percent of Total Dropouts by Race/ Ethnic Category
Grades 7–12

Race/ Ethnic Category	1988–89		1989–90		1990–91		1991–92*	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
American Indian	31	0.1	24	0.1	20	0.1	51	0.4
Asian	370	1.8	346	2.0	331	2.3	318	2.2
Black	6,454	31.1	5,306	31.1	4,811	33.5	4,983	35.0
Hispanic	451	2.2	498	2.9	549	3.8	627	4.4
White	13,466	64.8	10,871	63.8	8,662	60.3	8,257	58.0
TOTAL	20,772	100.0	17,045	100.0	14,373	100.0	14,236	100.0

* End of year membership by ethnic group (and percent of total end of year membership) was as follows: American Indian 669 (0.2); Asian 15,869 (3.8); Black 99,079 (23.5); Hispanic 10,078 (2.4); White 296,326 (70.2).

Table 5

Event Dropout Rates by Grade and Race/ Ethnicity, 1991–92 School Year

Race/ Ethnic Category	Grade							
	7	8	9	10	11	12	Ungraded	Total
American Indian*	1.8 %	0.9 %	11.0 %	7.8 %	8.6 %	12.6 %	0.0 %	7.1 %
Asian	0.2	0.3	2.4	3.1	3.1	2.3	0.4	2.0
Black	1.0	2.2	7.8	7.3	6.0	4.7	6.7	4.8
Hispanic	2.2	2.2	7.2	8.9	7.6	6.9	4.2	5.9
White	0.3	0.7	3.9	4.0	3.8	3.5	5.6	2.7
TOTAL	0.5	1.1	4.9	4.9	4.3	3.8	5.8	3.3

* Rates in grade 11 and ungraded may not be stable, since they are based on end of year membership of less than 100 students.

Table 6

Event Dropout Rates by Grade, Race/ Ethnicity, and Gender, 1991–92 School Year

Race/ Ethnic Category	Grade/ Gender															
	7		8		9		10		11		12		Ungraded		Total	
	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %
American Indian*	3.7	0.0	1.6	0.0	10.8	11.3	12.3	3.4	7.4	10.3	15.3	10.3	0.0	0.0	8.1	5.9
Asian	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	3.0	1.7	3.6	2.5	3.9	2.3	2.9	1.7	0.0	1.1	2.4	1.5
Black	1.1	0.9	2.5	1.9	9.0	6.4	9.1	5.7	7.5	4.7	5.6	4.0	7.3	5.3	5.7	3.9
Hispanic	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.2	8.2	5.9	9.5	8.3	9.4	5.4	7.6	6.0	4.8	3.4	6.6	5.0
White	0.4	0.3	0.8	0.7	4.7	3.1	4.5	3.4	4.4	3.3	3.9	3.2	5.6	5.6	3.1	2.3
TOTAL	0.6	0.5	1.2	1.0	5.8	4.0	5.6	4.1	5.1	3.6	4.3	3.4	6.0	5.2	3.8	2.7

* Rates may not be stable, since they are based on end of year membership of less than 100 students.

Figure 1. Geographic Distribution of Dropout Rates for Male Students, 1990-1991

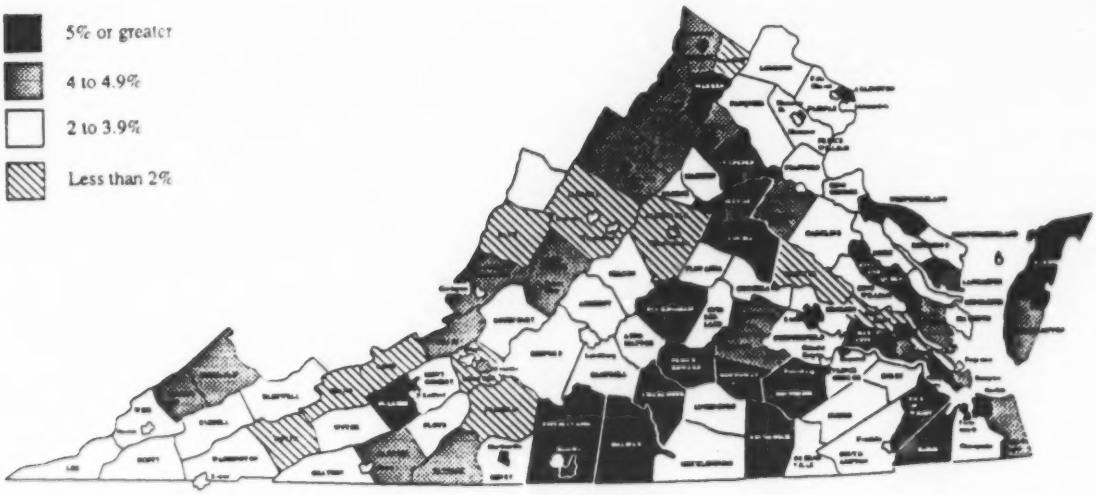


Figure 2. Geographic Distribution of Dropout Rates for Female Students, 1990-1991

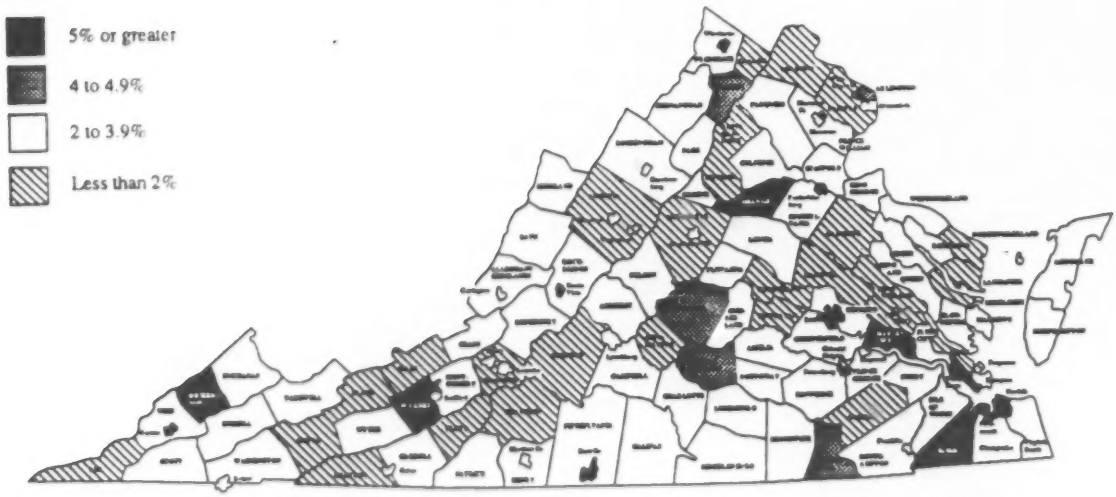


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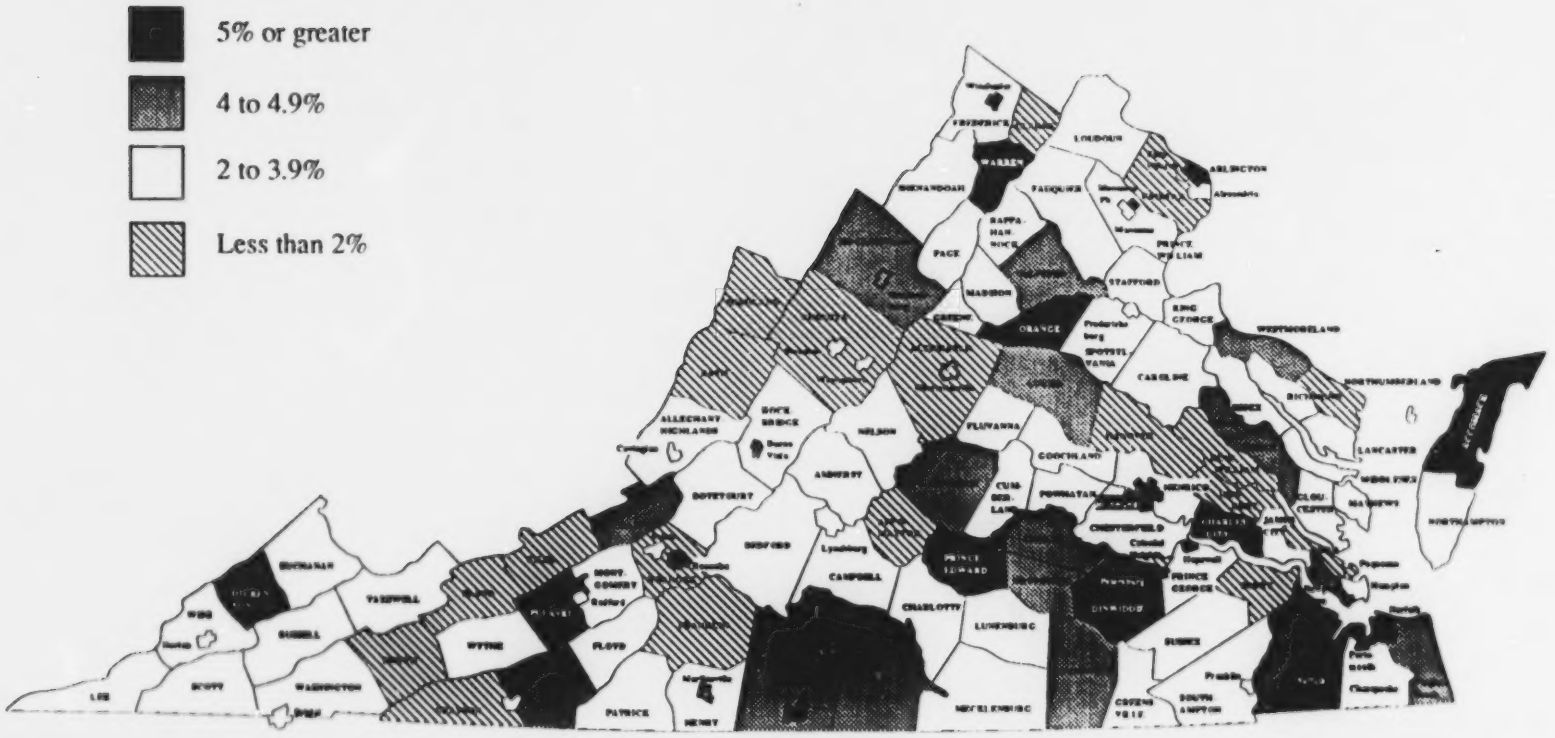
Figure 3. Geographic Distribution of Dropout Rates for All Students,1990-1991



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Dropout Rates 1988-89 - 1991-92
by School Division and Participation in
Project YES 1991-92

* = Received Project YES funds 1991-92

Dropout Rate

Division Name	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Accomack*	4.8	5.2	5.0	5.6
Albemarle*	3.8	2.4	1.5	1.8
Alleghany Highlands*	5.1	5.3	4.0	5.7
Amelia*	5.9	5.7	4.3	4.8
Amherst*	5.0	3.3	2.3	3.1
Appomattox	2.4	2.7	1.6	2.0
Arlington*	6.1	5.5	6.0	4.4
Augusta	4.0	3.1	1.7	2.1
Bath	3.1	4.0	1.8	3.1
Bedford	3.2	2.5	2.2	1.7
Bland	4.8	1.4	1.0	1.4
Botetourt	3.5	4.5	2.8	3.6
Brunswick	3.8	3.7	4.2	5.0
Buchanan*	4.2	5.4	3.9	2.4
Buckingham*	3.2	4.0	5.0	3.6
Campbell*	4.3	4.0	2.7	2.8
Caroline*	7.3	4.5	2.3	3.3
Carroll*	2.9	4.3	4.2	2.4
Charles City*	7.8	7.2	8.3	3.0
Charlotte*	7.2	3.2	3.9	3.8
Chesterfield*	3.4	3.2	2.8	2.5
Clarke*	4.5	3.2	1.0	1.4
Craig	3.3	2.1	4.4	1.3
Culpeper*	7.8	4.5	4.2	2.5

Division Name	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Cumberland*	4.0	5.4	3.1	7.0
Dickenson*	5.2	3.6	5.0	4.0
Dinwiddie	4.7	6.0	5.8	2.9
Essex*	5.3	4.1	2.9	1.3
Fairfax	2.6	2.0	1.8	1.8
Fauquier*	5.5	4.0	2.9	3.3
Floyd	3.6	3.2	2.6	4.9
Fluvanna*	2.8	3.0	2.9	2.1
Franklin*	5.6	5.0	0.9	4.2
Frederick*	6.5	4.7	4.0	3.5
Giles	1.5	3.3	1.9	3.1
Gloucester*	4.3	4.7	3.8	3.8
Goochland*	6.6	4.6	2.4	3.7
Grayson	2.0	4.1	1.9	1.9
Greene*	3.9	2.8	2.2	3.6
Greensville*	6.3	7.8	3.6	3.0
Halifax*	6.6	5.6	4.8	6.2
Hanover	4.1	2.8	1.8	1.4
Henrico*	4.6	3.5	2.6	2.4
Henry*	6.5	5.0	3.1	3.9
Highland*		1.2	0.0	0.6
Isle of Wight*	5.5	4.9	4.2	3.5
King George	2.4	3.3	2.2	2.0
King and Queen*	3.7	4.4	4.6	4.7
King William	2.8	7.5	2.0	1.7
Lancaster*	4.0	4.2	3.3	3.1
Lee*	4.2	5.9	2.6	2.3
Loudoun	3.0	3.2	2.2	1.8
Louisa*	5.1	4.8	4.6	4.4

Division Name	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Lunenburg*	3.8	3.8	3.0	2.3
Madison*	5.4	3.7	2.5	4.4
Mathews	2.0	2.0	2.8	3.2
Mecklenburg*	4.2	3.6	3.6	5.0
Middlesex*	3.4	1.3	2.0	2.4
Montgomery*	4.6	4.2	3.5	3.7
Nelson*	4.9	5.4	2.6	1.6
New Kent	3.0	3.4	1.8	2.2
Northampton*	8.8	5.9	3.4	5.4
Northumberland*	8.0	4.9	1.4	1.5
Nottoway*	7.1	4.5	4.0	5.6
Orange*	6.0	5.0	5.7	4.4
Page*	8.3	5.1	3.7	4.1
Patrick*	3.9	4.6	3.5	3.8
Pittsylvania*	5.3	4.6	4.9	4.5
Powhatan*	4.5	4.2	3.1	1.3
Prince Edward*	5.7	5.3	5.1	3.2
Prince George*	3.8	4.4	2.5	2.3
Prince William	3.4	3.2	2.5	2.4
Pulaski*	4.8	5.6	6.0	5.3
Rappahannock*	4.1	2.5	2.8	
Richmond	4.7	2.8	2.3	3.0
Roanoke*	3.6	2.8	1.8	1.4
Rockbridge*	5.3	2.8	4.1	3.0
Rockingham*	5.0	4.9	4.3	3.4
Russell*	4.3	3.8	3.0	2.7
Scott*	4.0	4.5	2.8	2.1
Shenandoah*	3.1	3.2	4.0	1.9
Smyth*	2.3	2.5	1.3	1.1

Division Name	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Southampton*	6.4	4.9	3.0	5.3
Spotsylvania*	5.5	4.4	3.8	4.0
Stafford*	4.5	4.0	3.2	3.9
Surry	4.6	3.3	1.5	2.6
Sussex*	3.6	4.5	3.3	6.6
Tazewell*	5.4	4.9	2.7	2.4
Warren*	10.7	6.5	5.6	5.0
Washington*	4.2	3.4	3.1	2.9
Westmoreland*	8.0	6.8	5.8	4.4
Wise*	4.4	4.3	3.5	3.1
Wythe*	4.5	2.9	2.6	3.4
York	1.5	1.3	1.3	0.9
TOWNS				
Colonial Beach*	7.1	2.9	2.0	0.7
West Point	1.9	2.2	1.0	1.3
CITIES				
Alexandria*	3.1	3.8	3.5	3.3
Bristol*	5.3	4.5	2.6	3.1
Buena Vista*	5.4	9.1	4.2	2.8
Charlottesville*	8.3	4.4	1.9	1.7
Chesapeake*	4.1	3.3	3.0	3.4
Colonial Heights	3.1	2.3	1.9	2.6
Covington	3.9	3.7	3.7	3.6
Danville*	7.4	6.7	6.4	5.7
Falls Church	1.2	1.3	0.0	0.2
Franklin City	2.2	3.8	2.3	2.8
Fredericksburg*	7.3	3.5	3.8	3.5
Galax*	5.3	3.6	2.6	3.2
Hampton*	4.6	4.9	3.5	3.3

Division Name	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Harrisonburg*	5.0	3.4	4.1	4.4
Hopewell*	8.5	8.4	4.9	8.0
Lynchburg*	3.2	2.9	2.5	2.3
Manassas*	4.4	3.9	2.7	2.5
Manassas Park	7.7	6.5	5.8	3.2
Martinsville*	4.8	5.3	4.8	3.9
Newport News*	6.1	5.1	5.0	4.8
Norfolk*	7.2	5.9	5.8	6.3
Norton*	4.7	6.3	3.7	4.1
Petersburg*	13.1	8.0	7.0	6.2
Poquoson	1.9	1.3	0.7	0.9
Portsmouth*	3.7	3.2	4.8	5.1
Radford*	3.5	3.5	2.2	1.6
Richmond City*	12.6	8.4	7.9	5.5
Roanoke City*	5.1	4.3	4.1	6.4
Salem*	4.9	3.0	3.2	2.5
Staunton*	6.8	4.0	2.6	2.9
Suffolk*	5.4	5.5	6.5	5.7
Virginia Beach*	7.3	5.0	4.1	4.3
Waynesboro*	2.6	2.8	2.2	1.8
Williamsburg*	5.0	3.1	3.1	2.2
Winchester*	5.4	6.9	5.7	5.6

NOTE:

1. Alleghany Highlands is the merger of Alleghany County and Clifton Forge City.
2. Bedford County data include Bedford City.
3. Fairfax County data include Fairfax City.
4. Halifax County data include South Boston City data for grades 8-12.
5. Rockbridge County data include Lexington City data for grades 9-12.
6. Williamsburg City data include James City County.

** Another school division receiving Project YES funds in 1991-92 includes South Boston. Dropout rates for this division were merged with Halifax County.

SYNTHETIC COHORT DROPOUT RATE
BY SCHOOL DIVISION
1991-92

DIVISION	DROPOUTS	SYNTHETIC COHORT DROPOUT RATE
COUNTIES		
ACCOMACK	128	29.2
ALBEMARLE	77	10.8
AMELIA	35	26.5
AMHERST	65	16
APPOMATTOX	21	11.1
ARLINGTON	282	23
AUGUSTA	71	9.9
BATH	10	21.3
BEDFORD	66	10.6
BLAND	7	8.7
BOTETOURT	71	19.6
BRUNSWICK	60	27.6
BUCHANAN	80	12.9
BUCKINGHAM	31	18.3
CAMPBELL	106	15.9
CAROLINE	25	12.3
CARROLL	47	13.5
CHARLES CITY	14	15.3
CHARLOTTE	35	20.2
CHESTERFIELD	467	14.2
CLARKE	9	8.5
CRAIG	4	8.4
CULPEPER	51	15.2
CUMBERLAND	37	34.3

DIVISION	DROPOUTS	SYNTHETIC COHORT DROPOUT RATE
DICKENSON	69	22.3
DINWIDDIE	44	15.8
ESSEX	9	8
FAIRFAX	991	9.8
FAUQUIER	97	18
FLOYD	46	27.2
FLUVANNA	20	12.1
FRANKLIN	122	23.1
FREDERICK	120	18.8
GILES	40	16.7
GLOUCESTER	96	20
GOOCHLAND	29	21.2
GRAYSON	19	10.9
GREENE	29	22.2
GREENSVILLE	38	15.8
HALIFAX	182	31.1
HANOVER	69	8.9
HENRICO	233	10.2
HENRY	161	21.6
HIGHLAND	1	3.6
ISLE OF WIGHT	61	20.7
KING GEORGE	24	11.5
KING QUEEN	19	26.5
KING WILLIAM	12	9.5
LANCASTER	20	17.3
LEE	51	13.5
LOUDOUN	112	10.9
LOUISA	65	23.2

DIVISION	DROPOUTS	SYNTHETIC COHORT DROPOUT RATE
LUNENBURG	18	8.9
MADISON	38	24.4
MATHEWS	18	17.1
MECKLENBURG	120	25.7
MIDDLESEX	12	14.2
MONTGOMERY	137	20.4
NELSON	15	9.5
NEW KENT	18	12.9
NORTHAMPTON	57	30.3
NORTHUMBERLAND	10	9.2
NOTTOWAY	59	29.8
ORANGE	73	25.1
PAGE	62	23.3
PATRICK	49	20.8
PITTSYLVANIA	198	24
POWHATAN	13	7.5
PRINCE EDWARD	34	19.3
PRINCE GEORGE	48	13.7
PRINCE WILLIAM	424	13.7
PULASKI	135	27.6
RAPPAHANNOCK	0	0
RICHMOND	16	18.7
ROANOKE	77	7.7
ROCKBRIDGE	43	16.7
ROCKINGHAM	137	19.1
RUSSELL	78	18.3
SCOTT	46	13.6
SHENANDOAH	39	11.1

DIVISION	DROPOUTS	SYNTHETIC COHORT DROPOUT RATE
SMYTH	18	4.2
SOUTHAMPTON	59	28.9
SPOTSYLVANIA	227	22.1
STAFFORD	221	21.4
SURRY	13	16.8
SUSSEX	45	34.3
TAZEWELL	105	14
WARREN	89	27.4
WASHINGTON	107	16.6
WESTMORELAND	32	23.9
WISE	126	18.5
WYTHE	67	18.7
YORK	41	6
ALLEGHANY HIGHLANDS	84	28.9
CITIES		
ALEXANDRIA	132	17.6
BRISTOL	35	17
BUENA VISTA	14	15.7
CHARLOTTESVILLE	30	10
COLONIAL HEIGHTS	25	12.4
COVINGTON	16	21.9
DANVILLE	130	28.5
FALLS CHURCH	1	1.1
FREDERICKSBURG	29	20.5
GALAX	16	19.3
HAMPTON	303	18.9
HARRISONBURG	57	24.3

DIVISION	DROPOUTS	SYNTHETIC COHORT DROPOUT RATE
HOPEWELL	139	40.8
LYNCHBURG	90	13.2
MARTINSVILLE	54	22.8
NEWPORT NEWS	540	26.3
NORFOLK	740	32.3
NORTON	17	24.4
PETERSBURG	137	31.6
PORTSMOUTH	342	24.1
RADFORD	11	8.8
RICHMOND	508	28.9
ROANOKE	335	33.7
STAUNTON	35	17
SUFFOLK	216	28.9
VIRGINIA BEACH	1271	24
WAYNESBORO	20	11.1
WILLIAMSBURG	57	13.1
WINCHESTER	72	29.3
SOUTH BOSTON	---	---
FAIRFAX	---	---
FRANKLIN	24	16.4
CHESAPEAKE	433	18.7
LEXINGTON	---	---
SALEM	41	14.4
BEDFORD	---	---
POQUOSON	10	5.4
MANASSAS	49	15.2
MANASSAS PARK	16	19.4

DIVISION	DROPOUTS	SYNTHETIC COHORT DROPOUT RATE
TOWNS		
COLONIAL BEACH	2	2.9
WEST POINT	4	7.4

NOTE:

1. Alleghany Highlands is the merger of Alleghany County and Clifton Forge City.
2. Bedford County data include Bedford City.
3. Fairfax County data include Fairfax City.
4. Halifax County data include South Boston City data for grades 8-12.
5. Rockbridge County data include Lexington City data for grades 9-12.
6. Williamsburg City data include James City County.
7. South Boston data are merged with Halifax County.

Technical Notes
Examples of Calculations

Table 1: Event dropout rate, 1991-92

$$\frac{\text{Dropouts}}{\text{End of Year Membership + Dropouts}} \times 100 = \text{Event dropout rate}$$

$$\frac{14,236}{422,021^* + 14,236} \times 100 = 3.3\%$$

Table 2: Percentage of total dropouts by gender, 1991-92

$$\text{Males:} \quad \frac{8,390}{14,236} \times 100 = 58.9\%$$

Table 3: Percentage of total dropouts by grade, 1991-92

$$\text{Grade 7:} \quad \frac{412}{14,236} \times 100 = 2.9\%$$

Table 4: Percentage of total dropouts by race/ethnic category, 1991-92

$$\text{Hispanic:} \quad \frac{627}{14,236} \times 100 = 4.4\%$$

Table 5: Event dropout rates by grade and race/ethnicity, 1991-92

Black 10th grade event dropout rate =

$$\frac{1,201^*}{15,155^* + 1,201^*} \times 100 = 7.3\%$$

Table 6: Event dropout rates by grade, race/ethnicity and gender, 1991-92

Female 12th grade white event dropout rate =

$$\frac{723^*}{21,672^* + 723^*} \times 100 = 3.2\%$$

* These figures represent data not included in this report. Raw data for end-of-year membership and breakdown of the actual number of dropouts by grade, race/ethnicity, and gender are available from the Division of Information Systems.

Synthetic Cohort Dropout Rate, 1991-92

The synthetic cohort dropout rate projects the probability of students graduating by means of an accumulative calculation based on event dropout rates for each grade level (7-12). The rate was calculated using the event dropout rates by grade level to determine the proportion of students remaining enrolled by grade level and then multiplying these proportions by each other. This produces the projected percentage of students still enrolled at the end of the six year period. This percentage subtracted from 100 gives the projected synthetic cohort dropout rate, 18.1%.

Calculations follow:

Grade	Event Dropout Rate*	Proportion of Students Remaining Enrolled
7	.5	1 — .005 = .995
8	1.1	1 — .011 = .989
9	4.9	1 — .049 = .951
10	4.9	1 — .049 = .951
11	4.3	1 — .043 = .957
12	3.8	1 — .038 = .962

.995 x .989 x .951 x .951 x .957 x .962 = 81.9

100 — 81.9 = 18.1%

* Event dropout rate by grade level is presented in Table 5.

APPENDIX G

STATEWIDE SURVEY

SUPERINTENDENT AND PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS WITH PARENTS

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

COUNSELOR AND TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

YES COORDINATOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 6-O
RICHMOND 23216-2060

JOSEPH A. SPAGNOLO JR. Ed.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

May 26, 1992

MEMORANDUM

TO: Coordinators of Project Youth Experiencing Success (YES)

FROM: Joseph A. Spagnolo, Jr.

SUBJECT: Evaluation Survey

As part of a three-year statewide evaluation of Project Youth Experiencing Success (YES), the Virginia Department of Education (DOE) is conducting a survey of all programs receiving Project YES funds during the 1991-92 school year. The enclosed survey is one of two components of the study and is designed to collect information regarding the implementation and outcomes of the program. The second component of the evaluation is a case study of seven divisions' Project YES programs. A copy of the first report from the evaluation study, Project YES: Does It Work?: Tentative Answers From A Six-Month Evaluation was recently distributed under separate cover to all division superintendents and Project YES coordinators statewide.

These data are being collected so that useful information will be available for the Legislature, Board of Education members, division staff and Department of Education staff. Data from the enclosed survey will be included in an interim evaluation report scheduled for distribution to the Joint Subcommittee on Dropout and Ways to Promote the Development of Self-Esteem Among Youth and Adults in December 1992.

Please carefully complete and return the enclosed survey no later than June 19, 1992. If you have questions about the evaluation or the survey, please contact Dr. Don Compton at (804) 225-3238. Your cooperation is appreciated.

JASJr/dwc
Enclosure
cc: Division Superintendents

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Division of Research and Evaluation

Project Youth Experiencing Success (YES) Report

Spring 1992

Purpose: The purpose of this survey is to gather data for a report to the Legislature on the implementation and effectiveness of Project YES.

Instructions: This survey requests information related to program implementation and outcome data for the 1991-92 school year. Please **type** your responses to all questions. Should you desire to extend your responses to any of the items please attach additional sheets to the back of the survey. If you have questions regarding this data collection instrument, contact Don Compton, Division of Research and Evaluation at (804) 225-3238.

Please submit one copy of the completed data collection instrument by June 19, 1992 to:

Don Compton
Virginia Department of Education
James Monroe Building
Division of Research and Evaluation
P.O. Box 6-Q
Richmond, Virginia 23216-2060

_____
Division

_____
Typed Name of Contact Person

_____

_____

_____
Address

(_____)_____
Telephone Number

_____
Date

1. From whom or from where do you get your best program ideas?

2. What would be the ideal relationship between the school and the community for your division?

3. What would be the ideal relationship between the school and parents for your division?

4. How would you characterize school/community and school/parent relations in this school division?

5. Are there state policies that are obstacles to keeping students enrolled in school through high school graduation?

6. Please list what you as YES coordinator consider <u>unique</u> and <u>typical</u> about your dropout prevention program.

<u>Unique</u>

_____

_____

_____

_____

<u>Typical</u>

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Please list what you consider the most and the least effective strategies of your dropout prevention program.

Most Effective

_____

_____

_____

_____

Least Effective

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. What aspects of your YES dropout prevention program would you want other Virginia school divisions to learn about?

9. What aspect of your dropout prevention program are you as YES coordinator most proud of? Why?

10. What are the best parts of your job as YES coordinator?

11. How has your job as YES coordinator changed over the last year?

12. In interviews with school professionals in seven schools participating in the case study component of the evaluation, three categories of at-risk learners were identified. Please indicate whether each of these three categories of at-risk learners can be found in your school division by entering "yes" or "no" on the line to the right of each category. Please see pages 7-9 of the preliminary evaluation report for a more detailed description of how student risk is established and a discussion of these three categories of at-risk students.

    a. Transitional at-risk students – Those who may miss school because of a long illness or death in the family or need to stay home to care for a sick sibling or child. _____

    b. Tuned-out at-risk students – Those who can be described as not caring, who are not serious about learning – those who do not like school for a variety of reasons. _____

    c. Dead-eyes youth – Those with blank stares on their faces, who have no sense of goals or directedness – those who are not responsible for anything they may have seen. _____

    d. Other (Please describe other categories of at-risk students found in your school division.)

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

13. As noted on page 11 of the Project YES Report submitted by your division in the fall of 1991, the following data are being requested for students in your division who dropped out during the 1990-91 school year. Please enter the number of students in your division who dropped out during the 1990-91 school year who met the following criteria:

    a. had been identified as being at-risk prior to dropping out of school _____

    b. had failed the Literacy Passport Examination _____

    c. had been suspended or expelled during the 1990-91 school year _____

14. On the next page you will find a chart, the purpose of which is to record the frequency and type of interaction that you and your Project YES staff have with the various agencies and programs listed. Please indicate reason(s) by entering appropriate letter code(s) in the column(s) corresponding to frequency of interaction.

    Codes

    R = Referral
    M = Money
    I = Information or materials
    E = Equipment
    F = Facilities
    O = Other

    For example: If you make referrals on a weekly basis to the Department of Human and Social Services and receive information and use their facilities only a few times during the year, you would enter "R" in the "Weekly" column and "I, F" in the "Rarely" column.

14. Please see instructions for this item on the preceding page.

AGENCY	FREQUENCY OF INTERACTION			
	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely
Department of Human and Social Services				
Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse				
Court Services Unit				
Health Department				
Adolescent Health Clinic				
Office of Housing				
Office on Women				
Women, Infant, and Children's Program				
Office of Special Education				
Guidance and Counseling				
Non-Formal Youth Agencies (4-H, Boy's/Girl's Clubs, FFA, Boy/Girl Scouts)				
Office on Youth				
Community Action Programs				
Shelters for Abused Families				
Literacy Programs				
Business Partnerships				
Job Training Partnership Act				
Other (please list)				

15. On page 10 of the Project YES Report submitted by your division in the fall of 1991, you presented one or more evaluation questions which you would be using during the 1991-92 school year. Now, please list the evaluation questions and for each give the outcome data or evidence from your own study.

Evaluation Questions	Outcomes/Evidence
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	

16. How would you assess your own efforts at evaluating your own programs?

17. If evaluation technical assistance were available, what kind of assistance might you want (e.g. designing instruments, statistical analysis, data interpretation)?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT.

EVALUATION OF PROJECT YES
CASE STUDY SPRING 1992

SUPERINTENDENT AND PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FACESHEET

DIVISION_____ SCHOOL_____

TAPE NUMBER_____

(CHECK ONE) SUPERINTENDENT____ PRINCIPAL____

INTRODUCTION

1. Explain the purpose and nature of the case study component.

   The objectives of the study are to (1) assess DOE policies and practices for serving at-risk populations, (2) assess local school practices and program models, (3) to ensure use of the evaluation information by local project staff, state project managers, and other decision-makers and, (4) to evaluate the consultative model of the DOE (as opposed to the directive model used in some other states) as to its effectiveness in improving local programs and policies. Each division participating in the case study will be provided copies of a report to the legislature in early 1993.

2. Confidentiality.

   Provide assurances to the respondent that any comments made during the interview will remain anonymous in any written reports resulting from the study and all responses will be treated in the strictest confidence.

3. Indicate that some of the questions may be difficult to answer.

   He or she may find some of the questions difficult to answer. Explain that there are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in opinions and personal experiences.

4. Permission to tape record.

   Ask permission to tape record. Explain that the tape recorder is being used so that the interview can be conversational, not restricted by taking time to write down responses. If the interviewee is uncomfortable with the tape recorder, make notes of the interview instead of recording it.

1. If you were going to present to a local service club such as the Lion's Club at a luncheon, how would you describe your YES program to them?

2. What for you would be the ideal relationship between the school and the community?

3. What for you would be the ideal relationship between the school and parents?

4. How would you characterize school/community relations and school/parent relations in this division?

5. Are there state policies that are obstacles to keeping students in school? If yes, how do they affect students and their families?

6. Is there anything else you would like to teach me about the YES program in this division or school?

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS WITH PARENTS

1. In your view, what would be the ideal relationship between the school and parents (at the division level, school level, program level, and student level)?

2. How would you characterize the relationship the school has with the parents in this division?

3. What specific actions should be taken to bring about the ideal?

4. Could you provide some examples and stories of effective parent/school relations?

5. Are parent/school relations different in the YES program than in the regular school? If so, how?

6. Should parent school relations be different at elementary as compared to middle school as compared to high school? If yes, how?

7. Where do you learn the most about being a parent? Should the school be responsible for teaching parenting skills?

8. Which parents tend to be included and which parents tend to be excluded in parent/school relationships?

9. What is the role of the parent's association in this school?

10. Is there anything else you would like to teach us about the relationship between parents and the school or YES program?

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

1. In your view, what would be the ideal relationship between community and school (at the division, school, program, and student levels)?

2. How would you characterize the relationship the community has with the school in this division?

3. What specific actions should be taken to bring about the ideal?

4. Could you provide some examples and stories of effective community/school relations?

5. Are relations between the school and community different in relation to the YES program than the overall school or division? If so, how?

6. What obstacles are there to improved collaborative efforts between the school and the community?

7. Which groups tend to be included and which groups tend to be excluded from school/community relations?

8. Is there anything else you would like to teach us about the relationship between the school and this community? Project YES and the community?

EVALUATION OF PROJECT YES
CASE STUDY SPRING 1992

COUNSELOR AND TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE FACESHEET

DIVISION_____ SCHOOL_____

TAPE NUMBER_____

(CHECK ONE) COUNSELOR____ TEACHER____

Years of Experience in Current Position___.

Grade levels served __

INTRODUCTION

1. Explain the purpose and nature of the case study component.

   The objectives of the study are to (1) assess DOE policies and practices for serving at-risk populations, (2) assess local school practices and program models, (3) to ensure use of the evaluation information by local project staff, state project managers, and other decision-makers and, (4) to evaluate the consultative model of the DOE (as opposed to the directive model used in some other states) as to its effectiveness in improving local programs and policies. Each division participating in the case study will be provided copies of a report to the legislature in early 1993.

2. Confidentiality.

   Provide assurances to the respondent that any comments made during the interview will remain anonymous in any written reports resulting from the study and all responses will be treated in the strictest confidence.

3. Indicate that some of the questions may be difficult to answer.

   He or she may find some of the questions difficult to answer. Explain that there are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in opinions and personal experiences.

4. Permission to tape record.

   Ask permission to tape record. Explain that the tape recorder is being used so that the interview can be conversational, not restricted by taking time to write down responses. If the interviewee is uncomfortable with the tape recorder, make notes of the interview instead of recording it.

1. What, if anything, has changed in the YES program during the last year (staffing, kids, budget, services)?

2. What does YES teach about what changes are needed or what has to be done differently in schools at each grade span (elementary, middle, high)?

3. What about the YES program is unusual? Why do you say that? How do you know it is unusual?

4. What does community involvement mean and how is it played out?

   a) When you think of community, who or what comes to mind and what is included?

   b) When you think about community involvement in the school, what comes to mind?

   c) Please describe community involvement in the YES program. What is typical community involvement for a YES student?

   d) What would an ideal school/community partnership look like in YES?

5. What does parent involvement mean and how is it played out?

   a) When you think of parent involvement, who or what comes to mind and what is included?

   b) When you think about parent involvement, what comes to mind?

   c) Please describe parent involvement in the YES program. What is typical parent involvement for a YES student?

   d) What would an ideal school/parent partnership look like?

6. How would you describe school/community relations and school/parent relations in this division/school? What would be your ideal? What keeps your ideal from occurring?

7. In the first evaluation report, we discussed 8 policy domains including attendance, the driver's license law, standards for literacy (LTP), school suspension, positive self-regard, dropout reentry, parental involvement and community involvement.

   For each policy, are they being implemented differently this year than last year? If so, in what way? How did they change from last year when we visited?

   What are the consequences of these policies on students, staff, and faculty?

   Are there state policies that present obstacles for students to stay in school? If so, how?

   Do you have policy recommendations for the state in these or other policy areas?

8. In last year's interviews, school professionals described at-risk students as being transitional at-risk (affected by personal or family crises that kept them out of school), tuned-out at-risk (bored), and "dead-eyes" youth (blank stares, no goals). Do these groups exist in this school? Can you describe one or more of these types of at-risk students?

   What other categories of at-risk students are there? How do they become at-risk to school failure?

9. (TEACHER ONLY) What are the most effective instructional strategies for YES students? How do you implement these in your classroom?

10. Is there anything else you would like to teach me about the YES program, policies, or community and parental involvement?

EVALUATION OF PROJECT YES
CASE STUDY SPRING 1992

YES COORDINATOR INTERVIEW GUIDE FACESHEET

DIVISION_____ SCHOOL_____

TAPE NUMBER_____

Years of Experience in Current Position___

INTRODUCTION

1. Explain the purpose and nature of the case study component.

   The objectives of the study are to (1) assess DOE policies and practices for serving at-risk populations, (2) assess local school practices and program models, (3) to ensure use of the evaluation information by local project staff, state project managers, and other decision-makers and, (4) to evaluate the consultative model of the DOE (as opposed to the directive model used in some other states) as to its effectiveness in improving local programs and policies. Each division participating in the case study will be provided copies of a report to the legislature in early 1993.

2. Confidentiality.

   Provide assurances to the respondent that any comments made during the interview will remain anonymous in any written reports resulting from the study and all responses will be treated in the strictest confidence.

3. Indicate that some of the questions may be difficult to answer.

   He or she may find some of the questions difficult to answer. Explain that there are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in opinions and personal experiences.

4. Permission to tape record.

   Ask permission to tape record. Explain that the tape recorder is being used so that the interview can be conversational, not restricted by taking time to write down responses. If the interviewee is uncomfortable with the tape recorder, make notes of the interview instead of recording it.

1. What, if anything, has changed in the YES program during the last year (staffing, kids, budget, services)?

2. What does YES teach about what changes are needed or what has to be done differently in schools at each grade span (elementary, middle, high)?

3. What about the YES program is unusual?
   Why do you say that?
   How do you know it is unusual?

4. What does community involvement mean and how is it played out?

   a) When you think of community, who or what comes to mind and what is included?

   b) When you think about community involvement in the school, what comes to mind?

   c) Please describe community involvement in the YES program. What is typical community involvement for a YES student?

   d) What would an ideal school/community partnership look like in YES?

5. What does parent involvement mean and how is it played out?

   a) When you think of parent involvement, who or what comes to mind and what is included?

   b) When you think about parent involvement, what comes to mind?

   c) Please describe parent involvement in the YES program. What is typical parent involvement for a YES student?

   d) What would an ideal school/parent partnership look like?

6. How would you describe school/community relations and school/parent relations in this division/school? What would be your ideal? What keeps your ideal from occurring?

7. In the first evaluation report, we discussed 8 policy domains including attendance, the driver's license law, standards for literacy (LPT), school suspension, positive self-regard, dropout reentry, parental involvement and community involvement.

   For each policy, are they being implemented differently this year than last year? If so, in what way? How did they change from last year when we visited?

   What are the consequences of these policies on students, staff, and faculty?

   Are there state policies that present obstacles for students to stay in school? If so, how?

   Do you have policy recommendations for the state in these or other policy areas?

8. What are the identified outcome measures for the evaluation of the YES program? What did the data show?

9. In last year's interviews, school professionals described at-risk students as being transitional at-risk (affected by personal or family crises that kept them out of school), tuned-out at-risk (bored), and "dead-eyes" youth (blank stares, no goals). Do these groups exist in this school? Can you describe one or more of these types of at-risk students?

   What other categories of at-risk students are there? How do they become at-risk to school failure?

10. Does your division have adequate resources to implement Project YES? Has funding for your division changed in the last year? If so, why?

11. Is there anything else you would like to teach me about the YES program, policies, or community and parental involvement?

APPENDIX H

DESCRIPTION OF CASE STUDY SCHOOLS

CASE STUDY DIVISIONS - PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

The following brief program descriptions do not include a comprehensive overview of services for at-risk students. Project YES funds are typically incorporated into a school division's dropout prevention efforts.

Alexandria City - The Dropout Prevention Program in the Alexandria public schools emphasizes prevention, intervention, retention, and reclamation. One of the primary goals is to provide positive intervention to encourage students to stay in school. Students whose school records fit a "potential dropout" profile are identified and referred for participation. One option for an alternative plan for dropouts and potential dropouts is participation in the T.C. Williams Secondary Training and Education Program (STEP). This is an alternative program that offers vocational exploration, basic academics, computer experiences, and guidance and counseling. Other options include a GED program, job apprenticeships and the Adult Education Program. Small group intervention sessions are held at each elementary to provide a resource for students having problems in such areas as attendance, behavior and performance. Direct involvement with city agencies is an important project effort.

Charlottesville City - Project YES in the Charlottesville City schools is a three-tier program. For students in pre-kindergarten through grade 4, the focus is on parent education. Students in grades 5 through 8 receive tutorial assistance primarily directed toward mastering the Literacy Passport examination. Study skills and conflict management training are also incorporated in these grade levels. Project YES supports a half-time teaching position at the high school level. This staff member provides individual counseling to students, assists in the implementation of a self-paced instructional program and monitors a work-study program. The program is being reevaluated during the 1992-93 school year, and it is anticipated that significant changes will be implemented during 1993-94.

Martinsville City - Project YES funds in the Martinsville public schools are used to fund a dropout prevention coordinator for the division. A systemwide program has been implemented that includes individual or small group counseling, self-esteem activities, a tutoring program using community college students, an Adopt-a-School program and school-business partnerships, as well as a divisionwide staff development program. The program is being reevaluated during the 1992-93 school year and it is anticipated that significant changes will be implemented during 1993-94.

Montgomery County - The Independence Secondary School, funded partially by Project YES funds, serves approximately 45 students in grades 7-12 over the course of a school year. Students receive

regular academic and vocational preparation, intensive support services and counseling, affective skills training, and enrichment. The focus of the program is on developing the whole child and promoting self-esteem. In addition, a social worker provides services including assessment of the home situation, short-term family counseling, and referral to needed community services. A second effort funded by Project YES is a GED preparatory class for 17-year-old students who have few credits and who either are at-risk or who have dropped out. A vocational education component is a part of the GED program and involves career counseling, career exploration, and job shadowing. Approximately 20 students are served in this program.

Nelson County - ALPHA (Alternative Learning Program: Hope and Achievement) is a nontraditional high school program for 65 students in grades 9-12. Admission is by application, and participation is voluntary. Students receive a regular diploma. The program is housed as a School-Within-a-School at Nelson County High School and has been operating since September 1990. The program was designed by a team of five teachers who work with students to implement the program in a way that develops student learning and responsibility for their actions. ALPHA provides instruction in science, English, mathematics, and social studies during a three-period block in the morning. Students work individually or in teams on interdisciplinary projects designed to make learning traditional subjects interesting and relevant. The ALPHA curriculum employs an interdisciplinary, outcome-based approach and has been structured to incorporate the Virginia Common Core of Learning framework. A work/study internship program is available for eligible students who leave school in the afternoons for employment at selected job sites. Those not participating in the work/study program return to the regular high school program for afternoon classes. Students are eligible to participate in all school functions and extracurricular activities. The key to the success of the program has been the empowerment of the teachers and students to implement a program designed to meet the unique individual needs of the students.

Formal evaluations of the ALPHA program in 1990-91 and 1991-92 indicated that students had better attendance, higher grades, fewer discipline problems and greater increases in standardized test scores than in previous years.

Richmond City - Project YES funds are used to meet the needs of at-risk students within the system by providing additional staff to work with them in three main areas. The elementary component consists of direct home contact for students with poor attendance. The high school component involves follow-up by the staff on YES students previously assisted in middle schools. The main thrust is at the middle school level, where students are identified and involved in several of many programs, which vary from school to school. These programs include Becoming A Woman Club, mentorships

involving community volunteers, Virginia Commonwealth University's Concerned Scholars program, individualized tutoring, artist-in-residence art therapy sessions, the Gilpin Court Parent Association in-school effort, and numerous others. The Mosby Middle School program serves 42 students, two or more years overage for their grade level, who participate in a half-day vocational training program at the Richmond Technical Center. Job-related training is provided in the areas of clothing, auto mechanics, carpentry, welding, commercial food preparation and masonry.

Virginia Beach - Project YES funds in the Virginia Beach public schools are used to support the Center for Effective Learning, the Open Campus High School, and the Career Development Center. The Center for Effective Learning was established to provide a short-term educational program for students who, because of their behavior, need to be temporarily removed from their regular schools. This educational strategy is designed to modify student behavior in ways that ultimately will allow the student to return to a regular school environment and to behave in ways that are socially acceptable. Returning the students to the home school prepared to assume responsibilities is a primary goal of the program.

The Open Campus Adult High School is a flexible educational option for adults or students who have dropped out and who desire to complete their high school diploma. The program provides adults age 18 or older who have completed the eighth grade the opportunity to earn a diploma or a GED degree. The Career Development Center serves students with both an academic and vocational training program that leads to a high school diploma.

APPENDIX I

ON PARENTS AND SCHOOLS

RON BRANDT

On Parents and Schools: A Conversation with Joyce Epstein

Joyce Epstein has been conducting research on teachers' practices of parent involvement and the effects of family-school connections on students, parents, and teachers for over a decade—including her current work at the Johns Hopkins educational research centers (CREMS and the Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students [CDS]). Here she discusses five types of parent involvement and affirms that parents want to be more involved in their children's learning, especially at home, and that they need clear direction from the schools.

What do educators need to know about parent involvement?

We're much clearer about that now than just six years ago. In our work with administrators, teachers, policy leaders, and other researchers, we've identified five major types of parent involvement. These five types occur in different places, require different materials and processes, and lead to different outcomes. [See "Five Major Types of Parent Involvement," p. 25.]

The point is that any one practice—parent-teacher conferences or PTA activities or public relations efforts—can't cover the full range of ways parents and teachers need to work together for their children's education. Hundreds of practices can be selected or designed to promote each of the five types. [See "Examples" chart, p. 26.] And research is beginning to produce information on the likely results of different practices.

For example, several studies show that when parents help their child at home in a particular subject, it's likely to increase the student's achievement in that subject. By contrast, involving a few parents in decision making on school committees probably won't increase student achievement, at least in the short term. Parent volunteers at school can help teachers think positively about parents, and increase teachers' willingness to involve parents in other ways, but a few volunteers at school won't help other parents know how to help their children at home. Educators' choices will be easier if they know these things—and if they know their goals for parent involvement.

Photograph by Jon Van Antwerpen

What goals might they typically have?

I've compiled some examples of outcomes for parents, for students, and for teachers related to each of the five types of involvement. [See "Examples" chart, p. 26.]

What else have you learned about the effectiveness of the various practices?

For one thing, commonly accepted practices aren't necessarily the best way to achieve the outcomes they're supposed to produce. For example, we've learned that to promote Type 1 involvement—helping parents fulfill their basic obligations as parents—most schools conduct workshops for the parents. But parents can't come to workshops if they're scheduled when the parents work or have other responsibilities. We want to change the focus of Type 1 activities from the number of parents who come to school at a given time to the number of parents who get the information at times more convenient to them. Administrators and teachers can get the

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Five Major Types of Parent Involvement

Type 1. *The basic obligations of parents* refers to the responsibilities of families to ensure children's health and safety; to the parenting and child-rearing skills needed to prepare children for school; to the continual need to supervise, discipline, and guide children at each age level; and to the need to build *positive home conditions* that support school learning and behavior appropriate for each grade level.

Type 2. *The basic obligations of schools* refers to the *communications from school to home* about school programs and children's progress. Schools vary the form and frequency of communications such as memos, notices, report cards, and conferences, and greatly affect whether the information about school programs and children's progress can be understood by all parents.

Type 3. *Parent involvement at school* refers to parent *volunteers* who assist teachers, administrators, and children in classrooms or in other areas of the school. It also refers to parents who come to school to support student performances, sports, or other events, or to attend workshops or other programs for their own education or training.

Type 4. *Parent involvement in learning activities at home* refers to parent-initiated activities or child-initiated requests for help, and ideas or instructions from teachers for parents to monitor or *assist their own children* at home on learning activities that are coordinated with the children's classwork.

Type 5. *Parent involvement in governance and advocacy* refers to parents' taking *decision-making* roles in the PTA/PTO, advisory councils, or other committees or groups at the school, district, or state level. It also refers to parent and community *activists* in independent advocacy groups that monitor the schools and work for school improvement.

information from workshops to the parents who couldn't attend by using, for example, audio recordings, videotapes, summaries or newsletters, computerized phone messages, and cable TV shows. In too many cases, schools blame parents for not coming to the school building. The parents feel guilty for not coming, and their children feel bad because their parents didn't participate. To reduce the guilt and distress, we need new methods of sharing information.

But maybe parents ought to feel guilty if they won't exert the effort to participate.

Not necessarily. Expecting people to come to school once in a while—for an open house, a student performance, a parent-teacher conference, a report card pick-up, and one or two other important occasions—may be reasonable, but expecting many parents to come often is not reasonable. In fact, it's almost discriminatory against working parents, parents who live far from the school, and single parents with other family obligations. I'd like to see more attention to the type of involvement parents want most: how to work with their own child at home in ways that help the student succeed and that keep the parents as partners in their children's education across the grades.

Why do you emphasize "across the grades"?

Typical efforts to involve parents start to drop dramatically as early as grades 2 or 3. The parents at all grade levels want to stay informed and involved. When teachers and administrators develop parent involvement programs in the upper grades, the parents respond.

Let's go on to talk about Type 2 involvement: communication from school to home.

We've learned that a real problem in this area is making sure that memos and notices are written so that all parents can read them. Communications from school to home need to be sent in simple, readable, jargon-free English or in the language spoken by the family. They may be in print form, but they can also be sent by computerized phone messages, local cable TV, radio, or in other ways. Schools need to design and test more effective ways to provide information. We need to know not only whether messages are going home but who understands them and who does not, who we are reaching and who we are not reaching, and why.

Type 3 activities are those related to parents serving as volunteers at school?

The five types of involvement occur in different places, require different materials and processes, and lead to different outcomes.

Yes, and they usually involve relatively few people. Schools need to review the procedures they use to recruit volunteers so that all who want to participate at the school building can do so. This can be done with a simple form at the beginning of the school year or twice a year to capture the interest of families who arrive after school starts. The skills, talents, and available time of volunteers need to be matched to the needs of teachers; this takes coordination, which can be provided by a parent-teacher team. And schools need to provide some training to help parents be effective volunteers.

But schools should also find ways for parents to volunteer other than during the school day so that those who work can offer assistance to the school, too. Some volunteer work can be done after school, in the evening, on weekends, on business holidays that differ from school holidays, or during vacations. We'd like to see the definition of *volunteer* change to include all parents (and others in the community) who give time anywhere to support school goals and student learning. This would greatly increase the number of parents who are recognized as volunteers and relieve the guilt of parents who aren't available to come to the school building during the school day.

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Examples of Practices to Promote, and Outcomes from, the Five Types of Parent Involvement

Type 1 Parenting	Type 2 Communicating	Type 3 Volunteering	Type 4 Learning at Home	Type 5 Representing Other Parents
Help All Families Establish Home Environments to Support Learning	**Design More Effective Forms of Communication to Reach Parents**	**Recruit and Organize Parent Help and Support**	**Provide Ideas to Parents on How to Help Child at Home**	**Recruit and Train Parent Leaders**
A Few Examples of Practices of Each Type				
School provides suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level. Workshops, videotapes, computerized phone messages on parenting and child-rearing issues at each grade level.	Teachers conduct conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-up as needed. Translators for language-minority families. Weekly or monthly folders of student work are sent home and reviewed and comments returned.	School volunteer program or class parent and committee of volunteers for each room. Parent Room or Parent Club for volunteers and resources for parents. Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers.	Information to parents on skills in each subject at each grade. Regular homework schedule (once a week or twice a month) that requires students to discuss schoolwork at home. Calendars with daily topics for discussion by parents and students.	Participation and leadership in PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, including advisory councils or committees such as curriculum, safety, and personnel. Independent advocacy groups.
A Few Examples of Outcomes Linked to Each Type				
		Parent Outcomes		
Self-confidence in parenting. Knowledge of child development. Understanding of home as environment for student learning.	Understanding school programs. Interaction with teachers. Monitoring child's progress.	Understanding teacher's job and school programs. Familiarity with teachers. Comfort in interactions at school.	Interaction with child as student at home. Support and encouragement of schoolwork. Participation in child's education.	Input to policies that affect child's education. Feeling control of environment.
		Student Outcomes		
Security. Respect for parent. Improved attendance. Awareness of importance of school.	Student participation in parent-teacher conferences, or in preparation for conferences. Better decisions about courses, programs.	Increased learning skills receiving individual attention. Ease of communication with adults.	Homework completion. Self-concept of ability as learner. Achievement in skills practiced.	Rights protected. Specific benefits linked to specific policies.
		Teacher Outcomes		
Understanding of family cultures, goals, talents, needs.	Knowledge that family has common base of information for discussion of student problems, progress. Use of parent network for communications.	Awareness of parent interest, in school and children, and willingness to help. Readiness to try programs that involve parents in many ways.	Respect and appreciation of parents' time, ability to follow through and reinforce learning. Better designs of homework assignments.	Equal status interaction with parents to improve school programs. Awareness of parent perspectives for policy development.

From: J. L. Epstein. (Forthcoming). "Five Types of Parent Involvement: Linking Practices and Outcomes." In *School and Family Connections: Preparing Educators to Involve Families.*

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You said earlier that Type 4—parent participation in learning activities at home—is the type of involvement that most parents want more help with.

Yes, we've learned that we can greatly increase this type of involvement when teachers design homework to include parents on purpose. Of course, some homework should be designed, as it presently is, for children to do on their own, but some homework—once a week in some subjects or twice a month in other subjects—should be designed to require students to talk with someone at home about an interesting, important, exciting part of schoolwork.

How can busy teachers be encouraged to design homework of that sort?

Our research reveals a few key components that should help. For example, we found subject-specific connections between teachers' practices of parent involvement in reading and gains in students' reading achievement. Now we're working with teachers on a process to increase parent involvement in mathematics and science, subjects that are more difficult to organize for parent involvement at home. We call our process TIPS, meaning "Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork."

We've also learned that homework that involves parents can be scheduled on weekends, when parents say they have more time to help and to discuss ideas with their children. Schools often assign homework for Monday to Thursday only, as if it were a reward to have no homework over the weekend. We think it's better to give weekend assignments but make them different—enjoyable, interactive homework or long-term assignments that require some discussion or exchange.

What about parents who do their children's homework for them?

I think that occurs mainly because parents and children don't have a good understanding of what the teacher expects. When parents are oriented to the teacher's policies and patterns of homework assignments, grading, and so on, they know how to help and how not to help.

Let's turn to Type 5 activities, involvement of parents in leadership roles, school governance, and so on.

These activities are important too, but they typically involve very few parents directly; every parent can join the PTA, PTO, or other organization, but few participate in leadership roles. And those who do rarely communicate with the parents they supposedly represent to solicit their ideas or to report committee or group plans or actions. We know that, to improve Type 5 activities, schools need to consider new forms of recruitment and training of parent leaders.

How might a school faculty go about trying to improve their parent involvement program?

One way to start is by assessing present practices. This can be done with questionnaires, telephone interviews, or meetings and discussions. The important thing is to get the perspectives of teachers and parents, then develop short-range and long-range plans to strengthen practices in all five types of parent involvement over a three- to five-year period. This kind of planning, with activities and responsibilities clearly outlined, is very important if schools are to progress from where they are to where they'd like to be.

We've learned, by the way, that the strongest programs are usually developed in schools where there's a part-time coordinator to work with teachers and develop materials. The position of coordinator or lead teacher for school and family connections is just as necessary as a guidance counselor, an assistant principal, a school psychologist, or a social worker.

Can schools expect to get supportive parent involvement in all types of communities? Some educators feel that poor families just don't have the same goals as middle class schools.

Data from parents in the most economically depressed communities simply don't support that assumption. Parents say they want their children to succeed; they want to help them; and they need the school's and teacher's help to know what to do with their children at each grade level. Our data suggest that schools will be surprised by how much help parents can be if the parents are given useful, clear information about what they can do, especially at home.

We're seeing the same results emerge from many studies by different researchers using different methods of data collection and analysis. If schools don't work to involve parents, then parent education and family social class are very important for deciding who becomes involved. But if schools take parent involvement seriously and work to involve all parents, then social class and parents' level of education decrease or disappear as important factors.

But isn't it true that some children come from homes in which they're mistreated or badly neglected? And don't teachers and administrators have reason to feel concerned about that?

Yes, a small number of children and families need special attention from health and social service professionals. But in some schools educators have used these few as excuses for not developing partnerships with all parents. From research on parent involvement in urban, rural, and suburban schools, we believe that about 2 to 5 percent of parents may have severe problems that interfere, at least for a time, with developing partnerships, and we know, too, that about 20 percent of all parents are already successfully involved.

But the other 75 percent would like to become more effective partners with their children's schools. The percentages vary somewhat from school to school, but the pattern is the same, with most parents at all grade levels wanting and needing information and guidance from their children's schools and teachers. All schools have the opportunity to build strong partnerships with parents.□

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APPENDIX J

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

1. **The program is voluntary.**

   Very important to presumed and actual effectiveness is that students and staff alike want to participate. All must volunteer to become part of the project, but not all volunteers are accepted. Wanting to enter a program designed to respond to students' educational needs and wants - cognitive, emotional, and social - can be an authentic commitment to change, e.g., improve one's grades or be absent less often. Authentic student self-commitment can drive program effectiveness, which is basically student change. This is directly related to attendance.

2. **The program is individualized.**

   Students are all dissimilar as well as similar. A program that can meet individual needs and wants is more effective than one that tries to meet the needs of an average or typical student. Aspects of this individualization include assessments and sufficient time for students to work on projects and for student-faculty work. Here, there is a direct connection to student frustration and accomplishment, which are related to positive self-regard and in turn, to reduced absenteeism and again, perhaps to reduced "behavioral problems."

3. **The program is small.**

   Important here is whether students feel that the program is the right size for them, typically, small, and that it is safe, supportive, friendly and real. A student feels that he or she belongs and feels good about the experience.

   This links to an individualized program, which in turn requires sufficient time and a low staff-student ratio, i.e., is more expensive.

4. **The program is real, in student terms.**

   A program works when students experience it as real, i.e., authentic, meaningful, and not simply "make work." Again, the link to a small, voluntary, individualized program is self-evident.

5. **Students are seen and responded to as people, and as youth.**

   Programs for students work less well for these children and youth than individualized attention to individuals. This includes a sense that one is respected, cared for, and confirmed in his or her uniqueness as a person.

All truly effective programs will show a moral purpose, building upon values and beliefs about human development and about being human.

6. The program has talented, trained, child-focused staff.

Only adults who care about the child's talents and possibilities can communicate the respect, dignity, and play that characterize the most serious and effective learning and education.

Each adult must be a competent, trained, and child-focused pedagogue - working in the service of the child's education.

7. Responsibility and power are shared.

Effective programs show cooperation among students, faculty, and staff. Joint decision-making occurs among staff on some issues, among students on others, and among students and staff on yet others. True participation and meaningful involvement teach about responsibility, as does the experience of power. Positive human development is disclosed when a person uses authority and power responsibly in the service of the self and the community.

Effective programs teach this sociopolitical civic philosophy, and thus, enhance students' moral development.

8. The program is accountable through evaluation.

These programs begin with a moral purpose, e.g., to help high-risk students. Each is accountable to that purpose. Evaluation also must have a moral purpose to which it is accountable. An effective program is a morally just and equitable environment and process in which both children and adults participate and outsiders evaluate daily and endlessly to meet the moral imperative of accountability to themselves, the community, and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

9. The programs engage the parents.

Effective programs engage the parents in places and ways that allow them to teach the school how to work with them in support of their children. Latent debate over "ownership" and control over the child are absent, and the school and parent together join with the child for the benefit of the child, the family, and the school. Such are the dreams of the school staff and probably of parents also. The dream is not yet a reality, but effective programs are trying to put it into words, programs, and action.

10. **The program engages the larger community.**

Effective programs respond to the multiple needs and wants of the children as students and in their other social roles such as sister, daughter, baby sitter, and the like. School programs that work do this by inviting into the school other programs, services, and activities, including child welfare, public health, nonformal youth organizations (Boy/Girl Scouts, 4-H, FFA, etc.), adult service clubs, and local businesses.

The school is porous. The local community is engaged in the service of the child's possibilities, needs, and wants.

Effective programs are questions which ask everyone inside and outside of the school for answers: How can we be most responsive to these children, adolescents, and youth?

Programs that work are open to the world outside the school. They exist as questions and only as tentative answers.

11. **The program fits the varied needs of all students.**

An effective program is one in which adults and students individualize curriculum and learning and interpret and "individualize" statewide and local school policies, rules, and procedures. These must be intended to enhance child and youth development of the person as a student (and also in his or her other social roles). Since policies are <u>a priori</u> general, they must be interpreted, grounded, and put into practice with wisdom and judiciousness. Rules <u>must</u> be grounded to fit the needs, wants, and possibilities of the particular group of students. Kids matter more than the school! Indeed, if kids do not matter more, then it is simply a "school," and it never becomes an environment for human development, including cognitive, affective, and ethical learning.

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